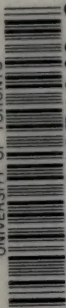



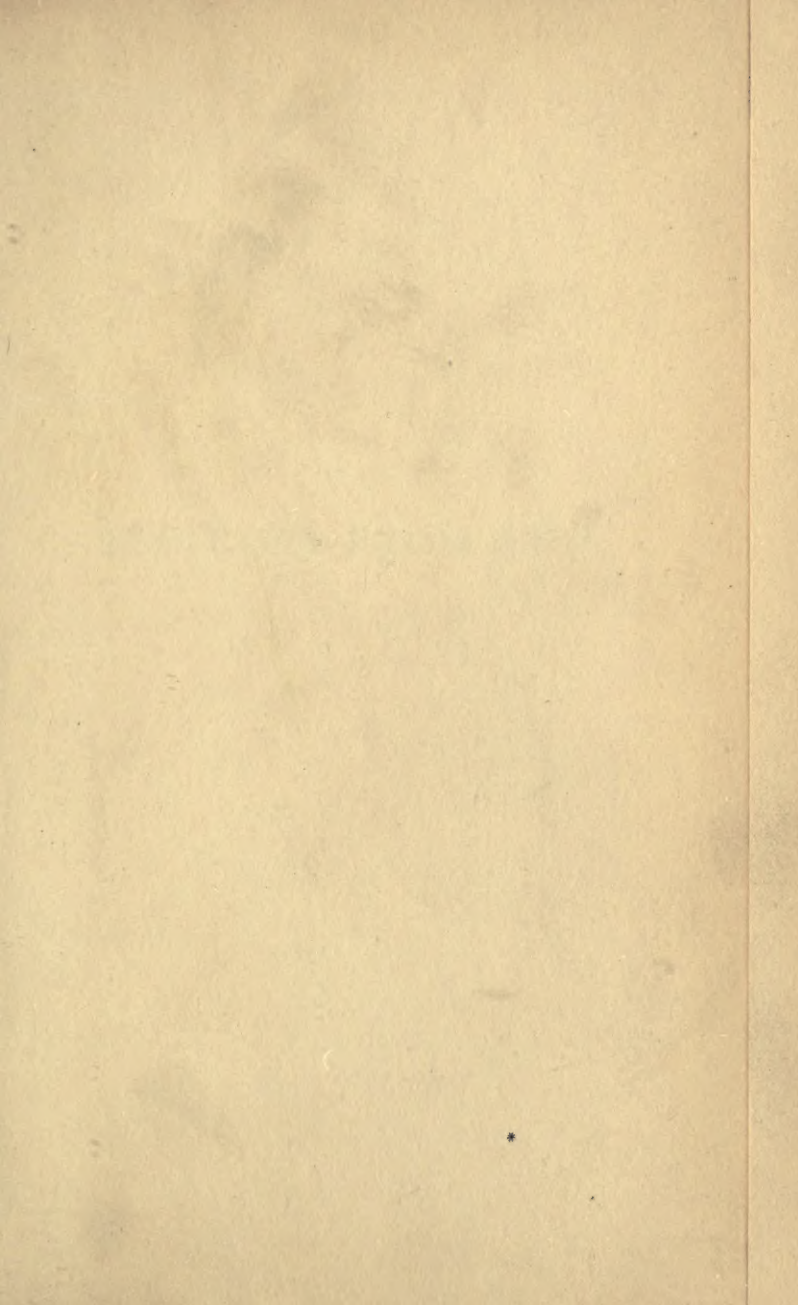
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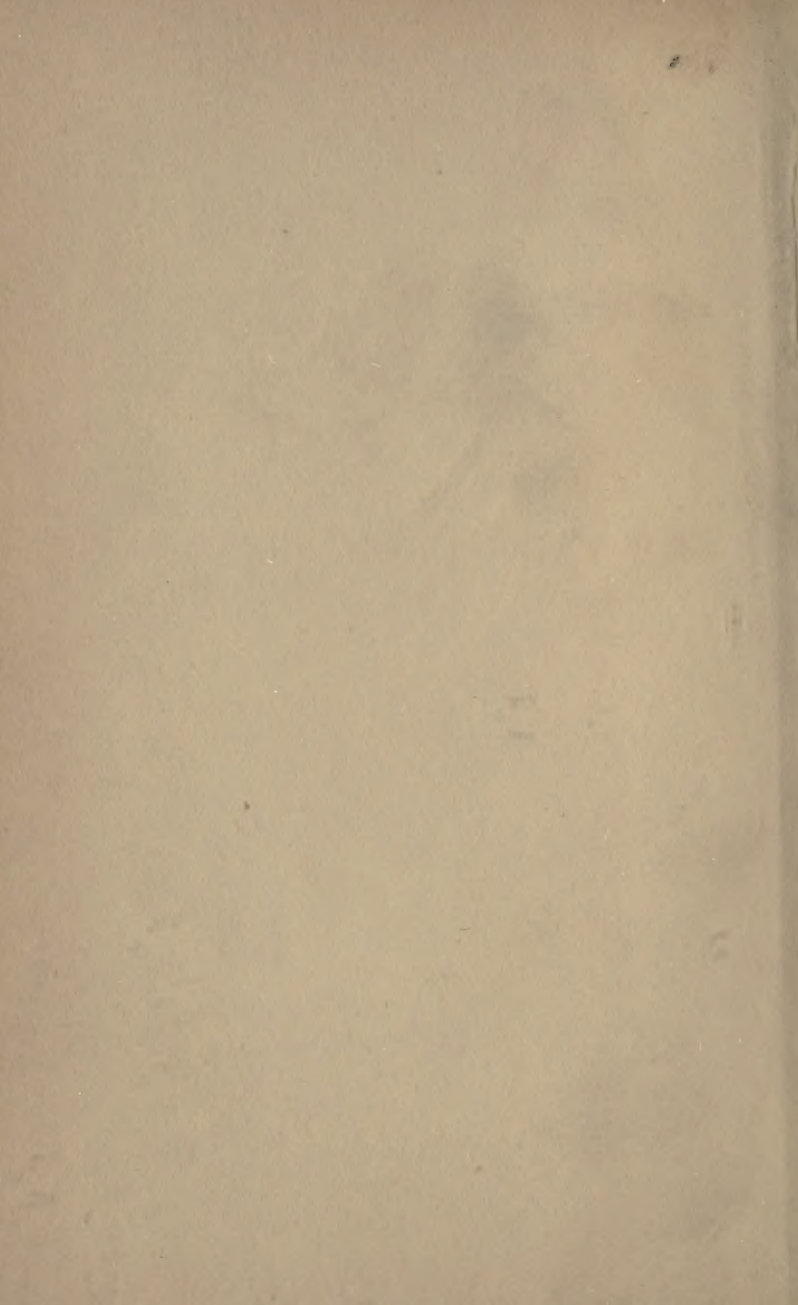


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SKETCHES FROM LIFE



Edward Carpenter
(1905).

1893

Sketches from Life
in Town and Country
And some Verses
By Edward Carpenter

WITH PORTRAIT

154574
26/3/20

London: George Allen & Sons
Ruskin House, Charing Cross Road

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SKETCHES FROM LIFE IN TOWN AND COUNTRY

MARTIN TURNER

TOWNSFOLK get their facial muscles pretty well exercised; they have to twitch some sort of greeting to their fellow-cits a hundred times a day. In country people the muscles of expression, from disuse, cease to act, or never get developed at all. Their faces acquire a stolid impervious look, and the town-dweller gets downright mad when, after letting off his best jokes and saying the most surprising things he can think of, the country-man still regards him with unchanged impassive eye, as though he were a cow or a tree. He goes off, spluttering contempt on the rustic's head.

But Hodge is not always such a fool as he looks. I have often been amused by the remarks passed when the man of words was gone.

"He seems in a mighty hurry, he do."

"Well, dun you see, he's got such a lot to say, he's bound to let it out somehow."

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"He war dauncin' about all the time, joost as if he war set on wires."

"Oh, he's a clever man, very clever. Now I lay he could thack you a stack in five minutes, or pleach that there hedge as soon as look at it."

"O ay, O ay! of course he could. What'd be the good of his eddication and sich, if he couldn't do that?"

And so on. Perhaps the Derbyshire farm people are especially notable for their stolid imperviousness of manner. There is a distich in the country-side:

"Derbyshire born, Derbyshire bred,
Strong in the arm and weak in the head,"

which is certainly not very complimentary; but I must say I have not unfrequently found under this mask of denseness a shrewd and active mind, and even lambent wit. Martin Turner was "Derbyshire born, Derbyshire bred." When I first knew him he was a young farmer, about thirty years of age, living on his own farm, into possession of which he had lately come by the death of his father. He was of sturdy medium stature, solid, tough as oak, with florid smooth face, high cheek-bones, and grey eyes. He wore, or very commonly wore, an ancestral green coat with brass buttons, which suited him well, and when he looked at you it was with that rustic no-how sort of look, of which I have spoken. Yet behind the impenetrable face, and hidden by those almost simpleton manners, lay an acute

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philosophic mind and a keen sense of humour. You would talk to him for some time, and his features would be like stone—you would not feel *quite* sure whether he was following; then you would begin to notice a little twitching in the ends of the mouth, the look would become quite intense and pointed; till suddenly, with a kind of guffaw and a quick gesture, he would turn out some absurdly witty or really telling remark, which he would repeat several times over, with emphasis, after which he would relapse again into the utter rustic.

Martin was young when his mother died. The father, a quiet undemonstrative old boy (who wore the green coat then), carried on the farm, and after the mother's death a niece of his, Elizabeth, came to keep house for the three; for there was also an elder brother, David, but he was decidedly "weak in the head" and incompetent. Martin developed an extraordinary taste for reading, especially, oddly enough, mathematics. He read algebra, trigonometry, and all sorts of outrageous things, conning them out by himself, and later getting a little help from the school-master. The father thought him a fool for his pains, but didn't mind as long as he milked the cows regular, and kept quiet (which of course he did) during his father's after-dinner nap.

There was one thing, however, that interfered with the nap, and irritated the old man excessively, and that was a *cricket*. It used to come out in a crack in the stone floor, just under

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his chair, and set up its infernal chirping. Old Turner used to jump up—he stammered a little—and say, “D-d-d-damn that cricket! Where is it?” But by the time he was up, the cricket was down, and they never could catch it. One day when he was asleep, and the creature in full song, young Martin (he was a mere boy then) determined to do for it. He got up, reached down the gun, put in a charge of powder, rammed it home, and coming softly within a yard or two took aim right into the hole. There was a fearful report and the place was full of smoke. The old man leapt up:

“D-d-d-damn you, M-M-Martin, what are you doing?”

“Shooting the cricket, feyther, shooting the cricket.”

“I thowt you had shot me; but d-damn you-you-you young rascal, don’t you do that again.”

“There’s no need, feyther, no need; it’s de-ad, it’s de-ad.”

And, sure enough, the cricket never sung again.

It was an old ramshackle farmhouse when I knew it, rather much out of repair. The old oak chair and the historic nick in the floor were there, but the father had gone to his longer sleep. There were the diamond-paned windows, and the tall eight-day clock, and the gun and the whips on their racks. And there was Miss Turner—Elizabeth—with her strangely pathetic voice and strangely bitter tongue and shrewish

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lip. And there was David, red-haired and pinched in face, nursing his knees by the fire, and crooning to himself, utterly useless. And there was a boy—Sammy—of about twelve, with large black eyes and curly hair, and sweet intelligent face.

Sammy was Miss Turner's child. That accounted for the pathetic voice and the shrewish lip.

Miss Turner had been loved once, by a rather handsome, dark-eyed fellow. Then, when it was all fixed up—wedding day and all—he had hooked off to another part of the country, leaving her to the scoffs and sniffs of the neighbours, and to the bitterness of her own heart. She was never the same afterwards. She loved the boy well enough, but for the most part the milk of human kindness seemed curdled within her. She could never forget that stab she had received. And, if the wound had healed over to some extent, it had only healed to leave an ugly callous scar.

Often when the feelings are otherwise disguised or buried, they will still reveal themselves in the vibrations of the voice. And so it was with Elizabeth. No one who listened for it could doubt that, deep down, the human heart was there, beating and still beating for its share of love and sympathy. But if, touched, you sought her confidence, it was at your own risk. For there were times when, with a hard steely look in the eyes, she would spare no one near

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her. She would look daggers, and speak daggers—ay, and use them too. She once made at her cousin (so he told me) with a knife. David would fly for his life, and not return to the house till late at night; Sammy, the boy, would laugh a little, but feel rather uncomfortable; Martin himself, with his stolid no-how-ness, would as a rule (unless matters became very serious) appear to be entirely unconscious that anything was happening, or would make some absurd remark, which sometimes of course only had the effect of increasing her fury. Savagely she would turn on him :

“And you’re the worst of all. It’s all self with you; that’s all you care for, there’s nothing else.”

MARTIN (*rather quickly*). “That’s all, that’s all; it’s a sad case, a sad case.”

ELIZABETH. “You’re the laziest pack of rubbish—why, you’d sit in that arm-chair till your backside came through the seat afore you’d do owt for your living.”

MARTIN. “Ay, I would that, I would that—it’s a deal easier, sittin’ nor workin’.”

ELIZABETH. “I allus said you’d come to no good—I told your father so—with your books and fads. Hanging’s too good for such as you—curse you!”

MARTIN (*nonchalantly, yet with a suppressed chuckle*). “It’s very stormy to-night, very stormy.”

Then he would take the lantern and go off

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to the cowhouse to milk the cows. Sammy, his eyes glistening large and twinkling, would follow. Sammy fairly loved his cousin, would follow him about the farm, learning the farm-work and absorbing eagerly that queer mixture of wit and wisdom, odd speculations, old fables, and general buffoonery of which the elder one's conversation consisted. He was an interesting boy, and his affection was sincerely returned.

As it happened at the time, I lived close by, and was in the cowhouse every evening, learning the sacred art of milking. The old horn lantern hung upon a nail; in the dim light Nellie and Rosie and the rest whisked their tails, or looked round, lowing impatiently for their turn. The low rafters were hung with cobwebs. It was a funny old-fashioned den, perhaps justifying in some degree Elizabeth's remarks on the laziness of its proprietor. For a time there would be no sound save the chewing of cud and the swish of milk in the pails, interrupted by an occasional ejaculation. Then, the milking over, we would relapse into conversation—a strange mixture of practical lore and odd speculations, ranging at its own sweet will over the world and things known or unknown. Sometimes right on in the night we would have to be up to the calving of a cow, and by the same dim light and under the same low rafters, would help, with the aid of straps fastened to its fore-legs, to bring the little creature from the mother's body. I always thought there was something especially tender in Miss Turner's care

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for the new-born thing—how she would receive it on a little bed of clean straw, dry some of the moisture of birth from its body with a wisp, sprinkle it all over with meal, and then lay it under the nose of the exhausted mother, that she might lick it and love it. Martin too was equally tender, and at such times between him and his cousin the hatchet was buried.

There was another thing which, I always noticed, caused a very tender feeling in this odd impassive man, and that was a picture. In the little-used, hardly furnished parlour hung a coloured print of an invalid girl, a girl of fifteen or sixteen, sitting propped up with pillows in an arm-chair. It was not exactly a work of high art; but there was a certain grace of expression and a haunting look in the youthful wistful eyes, which gave the picture real refinement. There was no doubt it touched him deeply, and he seemed glad of an excuse, in showing it to one, for gazing at it himself.

He was fond of children and young things anyhow—would go rambles in the fields with Sammy and the other boys, sometimes girls, or even when at work would have two or three around him. Then his talk fascinated them by its queer humour and suggestiveness.

“Yes, it’s an old wheelbarrow, this—a *very old* barrow. It belonged to my grandfather.”

“Belonged to your grandfather? Why, it must be fifty year old!”

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"Well, it'll happen be thirty year or thirty-five year old; it'll be as old as me."

"As old as you?"

"Of course, my grandfather put new sides and new legs to't; but it's t'same barrow. And my father put a new body and new stilts, and I put a new wheel to't last year; but it's t'same barrow—it has allus been t'same barrow."

"But it's all different. . . ."

"Yes, there's nowt of t'old barrow left—there's nowt of t'old un left; but it's t'same barrow, there's never been a time when it has changed into another barrow."

And he would burst into a great guffaw, to the delight and puzzlement of the children. Then at a later time, when perhaps only the elder ones were there, he would take up the parable again.

"You see, the learned men, the learned men, say our bodies change every seven year. There's nowt left in my body now what was there seven year ago, it's all gone—flesh, bones, hair, eyes, skin, muscles, all changed. But I'm the same person. I've been t'same person all the time. Just like the barrow."

There was a wonderful broad humanity somewhere, which kept Turner's flesh, bones, hair, eyes, &c., together. Never in a hurry himself or wanting to make a show of any kind in the world, he had time to go a little way on the road with most people, and to understand something of their natures. He would never allow the children to persecute animals. If it was only a

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worm he would say, "Put it down; don't tease it. It has as good a right to live as you." The neighbours thought him a little daft, with his queer talk and ways, and going about with the children, and I sometimes thought that he put on his simpleton manners to some extent in order to encourage this notion.

There was nothing that he enjoyed more than, under cover of this simplicity, to get an extra glimpse into the great peep-show of the world; and indeed there were few people who in talking to him did not unwittingly give themselves away to that simple rustic.

One day the little hamlet where the Turners lived was quite stirred by the news that Humphry, the engine-tenter of the brickworks, was going to hold a series of classes on the Bible. Humphry was about as ignorant a man as you could well meet in a day's journey. His only qualifications for being a Methodist local preacher were a pair of twinkling black eyes, a glib tongue, and a marvellous assurance of his own salvation. His ignorance was so great that I don't think it occurred to him that there existed such a thing as a science of biblical criticism, or that any of his audience might know more about the subject than himself. Hence he had no qualms.

Martin came to tell me all about the affair. "It'll be a rare treat—a rare treat!" he said. He had got together all the people he could, and I was to go, too. We went. It was a little room, the parlour of a cottage. The class, beside

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ourselves, consisted of about a dozen, some of whom were children. Humphry was there, licking his lips and twinkling his eyes. We all had our Bibles, and were to begin with the first chapter of Genesis, reading verse by verse in turn, while Humphry after each verse expounded a little!

All went well. Martin tried to get Humphry to explain exactly *how* "God moved upon the face of the waters"; the explanation was a little vague, but that passed. Then came the third verse: "And God divided the light from the darkness."

"How was it *before* that, Mr. Humphry," said Martin, "before he divided the light from the darkness? The light and the darkness must have both been there, or he couldn't have *divided* them; but were they mingled up together-like, or how?"

That was a poser. Even the glib man was at a loss.

"Yes," he said, catching at a straw, "I believe they were mingled together, as you say."

"I wonder what it 'ud look like," said Turner, all innocence, "when they were mingled up. Would it be like a mist, dotted black and white, a sort o' grey mist?"

"Yes—a sort o' grey mist."

"—Or would it be," continued Turner, without pausing, "in *layers*—first a layer of darkness and then a layer of light, and then one of darkness again, say like streaky bacon?"

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"Well," said the other, "of course we don't know for certain how it was. We don't know everything, you know."

Martin assented meekly, and the reading went on. Presently we came to the creation of Adam and Eve—"In his own image created he them."

"Does that mean," said the inquiring student, "that God is like a man—that he has arms and legs, and hair, and nose, and all, like a man?"

"Well, of course, not exactly that," replied the teacher, somewhat alarmed, "but there is no doubt that God made Adam like himself, *as far as was possible*."

"But it says nothing about as far as possible; it says, 'In his own image created he them.'"

"Well, no doubt, *before the Fall*, Adam was in God's image."

"Then God must have been similar to Adam, then?"

"Yes."

"But it says," continued the inexorable one, "'God created man in his own image; *male and female* created he them'—was God, then, like Eve as well as like Adam?"

Again the teacher was posed.

"P'raps he *was* like Eve," Martin went on, with hurrying emphasis; "they generally make him like an old man, with a long grey beard; but if he was like a beautiful woman, that would be much better, much better"—and he slapped his knee and broke out laughing.

There was a general impression that Martin

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had a daft fit on, and so the question passed. But Humphry outdid himself when we came to the story of the temptation. He explained, of course, that the Serpent was no other than Satan himself; and no one would have doubted the truth of this, had not Martin interpolated an innocent question as to how it was, if Satan was there, that his creation had never been mentioned in previous verses.

A happy inspiration seized Humphry to explain that Satan had been formed such a long time before the events described in the first chapter that his creation did not properly come in that record. Naturally Turner asked why it was that God had made the Devil so long before everything else; and Humphry, with another stroke of genius—which really contained within itself a whole philosophy—replied :

“Well, you see, when God was by hisself he found it dull and lonely-like, and so he created the Devil from the beginning, in order that he might have some one to talk to!”

After that we felt we had reached the climax of Biblical Exegesis, and that it was not necessary for us to attend the classes any longer.

Almost any scene of life delighted Martin Turner. To go to a mission-meeting at some local chapel, and listen to a greasy ranter talking about the joys of 'eaven, and the people shouting “Amen! Amen! . . . Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly!” &c., tickled him immensely; or

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a dance at a public-house, or an evening in town at the theatre, suited him well. On one occasion, having met with an accident, he was in the Town Hospital for two or three weeks; but the life in the ward, far from being irksome to him, was full of interest, and he came out declaring that he "wouldn't have missed that accident for owt."

This was rather typical of his philosophy of contentment. "People go about fussing to *get on*," he said, "toiling away, and taking no rest at nights—but it comes to nowt, it comes to nowt. I knew a man who gave up smoking. He was very fond of smoking, but he thought he would give it up and save the money; and so he did—for two or three years—and bought a cow. And then the cow died! Oh, how sorry that man was for all the smoke he had lost—how he lay awake o' nights thinking of all the good times he might have had with his pipe—all gone—not to be recovered! He took to his 'baccy, and swore he'd never leave it again. . . . Yes, some men toil, and it comes to nowt, and others can't help getting rich—they just swim into it. Best take it quietly and make the most of the days as they come. They'll never come back again."

Martin had an idea that some day he would give up farming, let his farm, and travel about for some years and see the world. It would have suited him well, but somehow he never carried out the plan. There was the weak-minded brother. Martin could not very well leave him, not to mention Sammy and his mother.

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Instead of travelling he frequented the public-houses, and saw a good deal of life in that way; but occasionally got more drink than was good for him. The neighbours thought he would marry, and then of course he would pack Miss Turner out of the house—"and a good thing too; and it's a wonder he's borne her so long." But he never did.

I couldn't help wondering sometimes what was the secret of his heart. But he never told any one, I think. Somehow I connected it with that picture in the parlour. There was no doubt that he was fond of girls of that age—felt quite a sort of fatherly romance towards them. Perhaps, I used to think, he could not feel *quite* the same towards the elder ones—not the same poignant tenderness; and that just barred his marrying. But I don't really know. How little we *do* know of the subtle tragedies of other folks' lives!

Anyhow, after a time, the boy Sammy grew up and married, leaving the old farm. It was a sad loss to Martin. Everybody thought that his mother would follow the boy. But no, the young couple did not want their household peace destroyed. Elizabeth remained where she was. Martin suffered her, as Socrates suffered Xantippe. He pitied and excused her. The neighbours wondered. If he did not care to break with her himself he might marry and "his wife would soon clear her out." But Martin did not marry. He accepted life with an idiot and a shrew, and remained a bachelor.

A VILLAGE LOVE-AFFAIR

"YOUR mother and I have been talking it over," said Mr. Rayner one evening when Stephen came in to supper after his day's work—"and we quite think the best thing will be for us all to return to Canada next spring."

Mr. Rayner was a smallish elderly man, who looked at you with a nervous inquisitive look, somewhat as if he feared you might be a detective. It was not very clear what his career had been, but he had certainly moved about a good deal from place to place, finding from time to time small jobs of a semi-commercial sort such as did not tax his muscles very severely.

"We hear that your uncle in Ontario," he continued, "will take us in on his farm—at any rate for all next summer—as he is short of hands. Your mother and I will do the lighter work, and you will get experience in farming besides very likely becoming the old man's right hand after a time, and necessary to him."

Stephen made no very audible reply. He was a little tired of these constant moves; and his father's *fainéant* ways were a burden to him. Besides—there was something else—something which sat rather heavy on his heart.

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"You don't seem very keen about going?" said Mr. Rayner, in an inquiring tone.

"It's that girl he's thinking about," said Mrs. Rayner—with intuition born in part of a mother's jealousy—"it's that Daisy Platt."

"Daisy Platt!" exclaimed the father; "why, she's nought. There's hundreds of girls better than her in Canada. Why, I'll tell you what she is—she's just a silly little kitten that'll purr to you one day and scratch for all she's worth the next. Don't you wear your heart on your sleeve for *her*, Stephen—that's my advice."

"Well, she's young yet," said the mother, "and doesn't know her own mind. I've no particular fault to find with her; but you never know with them young things what they'll be doing next, or what they won't be doing."

Stephen felt thoroughly riled, and very naturally so, at the turn the conversation had taken; and a silence fell upon the Rayner household for some days as to Canada and kindred subjects.

The worst of it was that the parental remarks had certainly had a good deal of truth in them. Stephen was awfully in love with that girl—just in the heat of a youthful first passion, unreasoning, all-entangling. Do what he would he could not pull his thoughts away from her, and yet—so baffling, so changeable was she—he could not let them rest on her with any pleasurable sense of fulfilment or security. And already for some time this state of affairs had caused him a good deal of vague and unexpressed distress.

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He was a strong, broad-shouldered young fellow, with a soft musical voice, though his speech and utterance were a little thick and indecisive.

He was working, for the time being, with a market gardener, digging, hoeing, weeding without end. The work was wearisome and fatiguing; the garden, only lately reclaimed, being full of coltsfoot and other churlish weeds; and he often had pretty bad attacks of depression and low spirits. These were probably due not merely to the long hours of labour, or to the emotional causes mentioned above; but partly also to hereditary causes, and the unsatisfactory and prospectless conditions of life occasioned by his father's unsettled habits. Perhaps his chief resource and diversion was music. Of this he was passionately fond; he was a member of the village band at Whinfield, and certainly the best player in it. Of an evening, at eight o'clock or later, his cornet would be heard across the fields, mellow and plaintive, as he practised "Rocked in the cradle of the deep," or his band-part in the "Blue Danube" waltzes.

Daisy could hear him perfectly well up at the village; and when the evening practice did not take place, or finished abruptly at an early hour, she concluded it likely that he would call upon her, and then she would go to the glass in the back kitchen to arrange her hair a bit, in prospect of his coming.

This happened an evening or two after the

A VILLAGE LOVE-AFFAIR

conversation above recorded. The playing ceased, and at about nine o'clock a low knock came at the back door. That was a pretty well understood arrangement. Daisy's father was quite an old man, a widower, well over seventy. He *had* been agent or steward to a neighbouring landlord, and a small pension now enabled him to live in a comfortable little cottage with his daughter. He generally went to bed about nine o'clock. Even if still downstairs, being deaf, he did not hear the knock, and Daisy could easily make some excuse to go into the back kitchen and tell her visitor he must wait. If on the other hand the father had retired, the course was clear for half-an-hour or an hour's talk in the little stone porch which opened on the vegetable garden.

"It's all right," said the girl, as she opened the door and saw Stephen's outline in the dusk; "he's had his pobs and gone upstairs. It is nice of you to come—I felt so quiet this evening." And she laughed in an elfish sort of way.

"Why, haven't you had another visitor?" said Stephen, with a good-humoured twinkle; "I saw some one coming away from here just as I got to the corner."

"That was the postman, you silly," she replied, and made a feint as if to rap his knuckles.

Stephen drew back with a quick motion, and then regaining his position, looked at her admiringly. She was a fair-haired little thing, rather fairy-like, with quick changes from ripples of laughter to a somewhat pettish expression,

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which latter, to some folk, made her perhaps all the more engaging. Standing there in the gloom of the porch in her light blouse, she looked very taking.

"I've brought you a Japanese rose from our gaffer's garden," said Stephen, bringing out a handsome bloom which he had so far kept concealed behind his back.

"Oh! how lovely," and she took the rose in a caressing way, and put it to her face; and then went inside for a moment to pin it on her blouse before the glass.

"It's so dark in here I can hardly see what I am doing," he heard her say.

"Shall I come in and help you," said Stephen, with a little laugh.

"No, *don't*," was the reply; and then—"What was that you were playing just before you came out this evening?"

"Oh, did you hear it?" said Stephen, rather pleased; "it was a new waltz we are practising for the Burford well-dressing next Wednesday. There is a dance, you know, in the evening. Shall you come? Come early, and I'll show you round—only," he added, "I shan't be able to dance with you, as I shall be in the band of course."

"Oh, that won't matter," came the voice quite cheerfully from within, and Stephen for a moment almost regretted that he had invited the lady.

But the next moment she appeared with the rose pinned to her bodice.

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"Now, doesn't that look nice?" she said.

"Very," said he, in an unusually deep tone, and certainly not looking at the rose only.

And she put up her lips to be kissed.

She did it so gaily and charmingly—almost as a child might. But Stephen took her in his arms and kissed her passionately. I'm afraid he even crushed the rose which he had but just now given her.

"Don't, *don't*," she said, pulling herself away; "I don't like it—it's not nice of you." And she wheeled round pettishly, and for a minute or two would not speak.

It was not pretence nor coquetry—nor, on the other hand, was it any very strict sense of propriety. It was simply that she did not like being hugged so vehemently. Partly she was afraid; partly she disliked anything which was more than a sort of playing with life. Life had been easy for her—a bit spoiled as she was by her old father. Love-making was a pleasant pastime, like eating lollypops, and somewhat on the same level. To spoil a rose and disarrange any one's hair was silly.

"Well, you'll come to Burford on Wednesday," said Stephen, after a pause.

"Perhaps I shall—and perhaps I shan't," replied Daisy, still in a waspish mood. And Stephen went away.

The well-dressing at Burford was a yearly festival, lingering still in that village—a relic probably of pre-Christian times when wells and streams were sacred, and under the tutelage of

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local divinities. It was apparently the custom from time immemorial in several villages in that part of the country to decorate the local spring or fountain on a certain feast-day with green foliage and flowers, and to join in dances to the sound of music. At Burford, the old well had been partly covered in by a sort of alcove with a drinking fountain, and at the time I am speaking of it had become the practice to line the interior walls of the alcove with flower-heads cunningly arranged so as to form designs; and the effect, under a sheltering frame of plentiful branches and greenery, was quaint and charming. Dancing (of an ordinary and modern kind) went on during the evening in a neighbouring tent, and booths and stalls supplied amusements and refreshments for the young folk.

Stephen, dressed in his band uniform and with his cornet under his arm, arrived moderately early in the evening—an hour or so before the band-playing commenced. It was not long before Daisy also appeared, coming along the road with two other girls from Whinfield, and the young schoolmaster from Burford—who had evidently gone to meet them—all talking lively enough together.

Stephen joined them; and after the first few greetings had been exchanged, the other three went on, and Daisy remained with Stephen. She was bright and friendly, and took his arm when he offered it; and the clouds of depression which had been hovering about soon blew away from

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Stephen's mind. They went and looked at the well. The design was in two sections—one representing Queen Elizabeth stepping on the cloak thrown down for her passage over the mud, and the other Lady Jane Grey in the Tower. The designs were really very ingeniously carried out, and the colours were quite brilliant.

"How do they do it," said Daisy; "how do they fasten those flower-heads to the wall?"

"Oh, they are not fastened to the wall," said Stephen; "they are stuck on wooden panels. They cover the panels with clay, and then stick the flower-heads in the clay, and then when the clay dries a little they can rear the things up against the wall."

"Queen Elizabeth looks grand," said Daisy, not paying very much attention to the explanation; "look what a fine purple cloak she has, with a gold border."

"Those are thistleheads and corn-marigolds," said Stephen, with a man's interest in matters of fact.

"And look at her white shoes," continued Daisy.

"Shouldn't you like the men to come and throw down their cloaks for you to walk over?" said he, a bit waggishly.

"I don't know," was the reply; but her face lightened up, giving the lie to her words of indifference; and she went on—"But I should think the men silly for doing it—even if it did save my shoes."

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It was quite a sensible answer ; but it did not exactly encourage Stephen to say any more at the moment.

They walked about a little. And then it was time for the dancing to begin. They went into the tent. It was a long tent, with a raised platform at one end for the band, while the dancers danced on the dry turf.

"I'm sorry I shan't have a chance to dance with you," said Stephen, returning to a subject he had mentioned before.

"Oh, *I* shall be all right," said Daisy, with exasperating sincerity ; "don't bother about me."

"I expect you'll be off home before we've done playing," he continued, half hoping that she might stay to the end and return with him.

"Yes, I expect so," said she. And Stephen joined the other musicians ; but not in a very good humour, it must be confessed.

Polkas, quadrilles, mazurkas, and waltzes followed each other. There was a buzz of movement and conversation in the tent. Swains brought their hot and mopping partners glasses of beer, or sat on the benches with them in the intervals of the dances. Heavy boots and rude clothing mingled with quite correct and elegant attire. The girls anyhow looked bright and neatly dressed—some of them quite up-to-date in their style.

For the first two or three dances Stephen could not see Daisy at all. She must have gone

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outside. Then she appeared, with the school-master fellow for a partner, in some quadrilles.

That was all right. She must have *some* partner, and he was a decent sort of chap—though Stephen did not particularly care about him.

But when in a second dance and a third she appeared with the same partner, Stephen became dreadfully restless and uncomfortable, and could hardly sit still on his seat, let alone play decently in tune. A *fourth* time the same thing occurred, and then in the interval afterwards he came down into the tent, and managed to get a word with the girl.

“What on earth are you dancing all the time with that fellow for?” he blurted out—unable to approach the subject in a more gradual way.

“What fellow?” retorted she, showing signs of fight.

“Archie Allen.”

“Archie Allen! and why shouldn’t I dance with Archie Allen?”

“Well, you might give him a rest; he must be getting tired.”

Daisy gave a kind of sniff.

“I shall dance with who I like,” she retorted; “do you think I have got to sit out all the time and watch you playing?”

It was no good continuing an argument of that sort, and Stephen did not want a scene. He let the subject drop, and presently went back to his playing. But he saw neither of them any

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more. They had evidently left the tent. And later on—when the evening was over—he walked back to Whinfield alone.

This sort of thing evidently could not go on. Stephen could not do his work. He felt out of gear and disorganised. The attraction for the girl was terrible on him at times, goaded often by her “offish” and whimsical humours, and now stung by an added pang of jealousy. But the thing could not continue thus, and he must come to some settled terms and explanation with her.

He knew that on Friday evenings, after her dad had gone to rest, she often ran round to her married sister’s on the outskirts of the village for half-an-hour. He was acquainted with the sister, Mrs. Goodhart; and on the chance of meeting Daisy he went round to the Goodharts’ cottage, and after waiting a little at the gate, met her coming out, and walked home with her.

She was in a better mood; and said that Archie (the schoolmaster) had pressed her so to dance with her, she could not well refuse; and then she would have liked to stay to the end to come home with Stephen, but it would have been so late; and the other girls were going, so she went with them, and Archie accompanied them all a good part of the way.

Then when they got to the little porch in the back garden, Daisy, in a sort of penitent way, put up her lips to be kissed. Stephen was awfully tempted, but remembering what had occurred before, he kissed her only quietly and

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affectionately; but there was a queer tumult going on within him.

"Stop a bit," he said, as she made a move towards retiring—"I want to say a word to you. You know my folk are talking of going to Canada."

"You did say something about it once."

"Yes; they will be going before long now—and—I shall have to go with them—and—I don't feel like going unless you go too—Daisy, will you go with me?"

He said this last in a quick pleading tone.

"Whatever are you thinking about?" was the reply.

"Why, will you marry me?—that's what I mean."

"O Stephen, how absurd you are. Why, I have never really thought about marrying."

That was about true; but it was not much consolation to Stephen.

"But, Daise, if I have to go, it's not very likely I shall ever come back again."

She looked at him in silence for a bit, and then said, "But you won't be going just yet, will you?"

It was in vain that Stephen tried to bring her to any conclusion. When he pressed her for any declaration or promise of love for the future, she simply put it off in an irresponsible way, as if the present was not a good time for considering it. When he talked of breaking off the intimacy she looked really pained, and even cried.

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Poor little Daisy. It was not so much that she was bad or heartless about it all, as simply that she did not "know her own mind," as they say—a mere girl, enjoying a little flirtation, no doubt, but not accustomed to see logical conclusions, and rather fearing and disliking all such things—something of a broken reed, giving way when any weight came on it. Probably once married to either of the men she would have been quite a different creature—responsible, serious; the dormant things of her nature would have developed, and the fairy-like charm and promise might have had their fulfilment. Did Stephen perhaps descry as he looked upon her some halo of visionary light encircling her, some outline as it were of the Redeeming Babe, some presentiment of that which might have been the saving of her life, and so of his own? Was it *that* which gave her such an intimate hold upon his very viscera and life-blood, despite all her queer humours and rebuffs? Would it perhaps have been better for them both if he had taken the law in his own hands that evening and paid no attention to her likes and dislikes—capricious and ephemeral as they were? But he was too gentle a creature for that, and too considerate; and he went away finally, feeling awfully hopeless and miserable.

There was no prospect. There was no way out, any way. On the one hand it was impossible to get the girl to understand, or to bring her to a point of serious consideration for herself

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or others; on the other hand the inevitable lapse of days and weeks brought the hour of departure ever nearer, and of exile to a world which without her would seem devoid of the least ray of light.

Something that had been slumbering in the back of his mind for some weeks came a little nearer the surface. It happened that he was in town the next day; and he went to a chemist's shop, and bought some laudanum. It may have been weak of him; but he did.

"At any rate," he said to himself, as he came out of the shop, "one can't go on living for ever with this pain nagging inside. They say that if you only take just a teaspoonful it quiets your feelings—even if one doesn't make an end of the job altogether."

And so it was that a night or two later he found himself again walking up the footpath to Whinfield, and this time with a little bottle in his breast pocket. He had made up his mind to have just one more interview and settle things finally for good or evil.

But just as he left the footpath and came into the road a hundred yards from the Platts' cottage, who should he come on but the said Mrs. Goodhart, going evidently to the same place.

"Good evening, Mr. Rayner"—she always called him Mr. Rayner—and they walked together. "I am going into my sister's—I expect you were going to call, weren't you?"

Stephen in a fumbling way admitted that he was. He felt badly checkmated; but went in

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partly because he could not think what to say at the moment.

They entered by the front door—Mrs Goodhart turning the handle and walking in—and found Daisy alone in the sitting-room. Mrs. Goodhart explained how they had met, and the conversation drifted along in a broken and aimless way, as it will do under such conditions. Stephen wondered to himself whether the two sisters might not want to be alone together, and whether he had not better rise and go; but he felt strangely powerless and hypnotised. Then presently he heard Mrs. Goodhart saying, “Well, I must be going now. I only just looked in for a few minutes to see how you were.” And immediately his spirits rose; he was all attention; there was a chance at any rate of getting a talk.

But what were his feelings when he heard Daisy reply, “Oh no, do stay a bit longer; it’s such a long time since we had a chat together.”

Whatever did she mean?

Mrs. Goodhart looked round in a somewhat questioning way at him and Daisy; and then, being further pressed by the latter, settled down again into her chair.

It was like a blow in the face to Stephen.

And what had really possessed the girl it would be hard to say. Was it possibly that she saw in Stephen’s looks something of what was passing in his mind, and dreading “explanations and all that sort of thing” her one idea for the moment was to escape them at all costs.

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It is impossible of course to say. Stephen after a decent interval rose to go. He shook hands with Mrs. Goodhart—who seemed quietly friendly—and then with Daisy. He thought that perhaps she would come outside with him; but she didn't. She just came to the room door, and said, "Good-night—you'll be able to let yourself out, won't you?"

Stephen said "Good-bye," and then again "Good-bye"; and then as he passed into the passage murmured something which Mrs. Goodhart did not hear.

He went out into the night. And yet as he did so he felt that he could not, could not face the world again—that he could not return to daylight and ordinary life under the old conditions. The spell which this girl had cast over him tangled and tied him in every direction. Every thought led up to one, and of that it was useless to think any more. A settled weight and horrible sense of depression enveloped him. Then suddenly he felt that strange sensation, that peculiar feeling like a razor at the throat which people sometimes experience in such straits—almost a sharp pain just at that spot. A momentary self-destroying rage seemed to seize him. But he knew that he had not the least intention of using a razor, for it was an idea that had never crossed his mind before; besides, was there not, there in his pocket, the phial which he had brought with him—he could feel it.

He turned off the road into the footpath by

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which he had come, and went down the fields in the soft beautiful light—the moon just half seen now and then behind a dove-coloured veil of clouds. At about the second or third field he came to a stile, and getting over it stood with his back to it looking at the quiet sky and across the valley in the direction of the home where his parents lived.

Then after a while he took the phial from his pocket, opened it, and smelt at it. It was rather pleasant. Then he tasted. It was not bad. Then a curious wave of impulse came on him, and he drained it right off.

For a moment he had a flushed hot feeling—half surprise, half fear, at the thought of what he had done. But it died back almost directly into the hopeless depression and pain at the heart from which he had been suffering for so long. Anyhow, the thing did not much matter. And as a matter of fact he did not feel uncomfortable.

Before half a minute had elapsed he even felt comfortable. Things perhaps would be better—perhaps they would be all right. He would feel better sitting down; and he slid down with his back still to the stile, into a sitting position on the ground.

The night and the half-defined moon took on a dreamy aspect—his thoughts wandered a little. He must have dozed, for he presently woke up and wondered what he was doing there. He soon decided, however, that it was all right, and

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closed his eyes again. Then his head sank on his breast.

The two sisters went on talking for a bit. Then the married one said :

"Stephen Rayner looked very queer, I thought—have you been quarrelling with him?"

"No," said the other; but she flushed uncomfortably.

"Didn't you notice," continued the elder, "that he said 'Good-bye' instead of 'Good-night'?"

"Oh, he does that sometimes," said Daisy evasively.

"What was it he said as he was going out of the door—I couldn't hear?"

"Well, *I* couldn't hear very well, but it was something about 'not see you again.'"

"You don't think he is going to do anything rash, do you?"

"Oh no, why should he?" replied Daisy; but she felt horribly uncomfortable—a sort of pit opened inside her.

"Well, I must be going," continued Mrs. Goodhart, rising.

"I'll go with you a few yards," said Daisy. And they went out.

When they came to where the footpath joins the road, Mrs. Goodhart said :

"This is the way he always takes, I suppose. Shall we go down a bit—just for five minutes, and come back again?"

So they walked down the fields on the beaten

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grass of the path, admiring the night, and the sound of an occasional sedge-warbler singing.

Then at the stile the elder sister's secret fear was realised. As to Daisy, she reeled and nearly fell when she saw for certain that the figure sitting more or less in a heap on the ground was Stephen; but she gathered herself together and ran back to the village for assistance.

He was still warm and breathing—breathing faintly and slowly—but in a dead sleep from which nothing would seem to waken him.

They got him to the Goodharts' cottage, fetched the doctor, applied remedies and walked him about the cottage floor for hours to keep away the deadly last stupor. The doctor said there was nothing else to be done, and even so he could not answer for the end. Daisy stayed a while, and then finding she could be of no use, went home and flung herself on her bed in a paroxysm of tears.

During that night she began to understand many things which had only been vague to her before. Fragments of sentences, actions, expressions of Stephen's face, and of other people's faces, kept coming back, and coming back, in ghostly fashion, and taking shape before her mental vision. At last, tired out, she slept a little; and then in the early dawn, waking up and finding herself lying on her bed and still dressed, she remembered what had happened, and seized with nameless fears crept out of the house again and round to her sister's.

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When she got there, he had gone. His father had been sent for. They had walked him up and down the floor and held him on his feet, and even pushed him to and fro, in spite of his remonstrances and urgent entreaties to be allowed to go to sleep—till by degrees he had mended somewhat, and the immediate danger was over. His father and Mr. Goodhart had then supported him home by the road, and doubtless they said the night air would do him good.

This was what Daisy heard; and so she went home once more—though not to sleep much.

She never saw Stephen again. It was many days before he recovered from the positive sickness and illness resulting from his escapade; and after that, weeks and even months elapsed before he really came to himself. He remained in a torpid, nerveless state—very depressed, and unable to rouse himself to interest in anything. No one of course mentioned to him the subject of what had happened. He mentioned it to nobody. There was no purpose to be served in raking it up—so it simply slumbered.

Daisy made no sign. She felt paralysed, cried a good deal in secret on and off, missed him dreadfully when he did not come to the garden door any more; but did not see what to do. She did not know for certain whether she wanted to marry him; she was inclined now to think she did, but she did not feel moved to take any initiative in the matter. Every week during which she let things drift gave the insistent,

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comfortable, self-satisfied Archie the advantage—till at last he occupied the whole field of view.

Mr. and Mrs. Rayner hurried on their departure for Canada. Stephen resigned himself to it in a passive sort of way. And so almost before he fairly realised what had happened the whole breadth of the Atlantic came down and established itself between him and Daisy, relegating all further thought of her to an insuperable past.

He woke up, as it were, on that side of the water—to wonder whether the last few years in England were not a dream. Daisy's figure truly was still there, alternately baffling and enchanting, like the wayward divinity she was; but it had retired into some ideal world, which the final catastrophe enveloped in cloud and obscurity, and the great wash of ocean rendered infinitely remote.

Luckily, lots of work and vivid occupation gave a new start and impetus to Stephen's mind. And the world which had appeared in prospect a hopeless blank began to break with rays of possibility and promise. The Canadian uncle turned out friendly; the farm prospered, Stephen's part in it became more assured; and in course of time he married—a rather humdrum little wife, it is true, but a faithful and helpful one—and settled down to a life as tolerable at any rate as is accorded to the majority of mankind.

Daisy, of course, married the schoolmaster. Her old father died; and Archie getting another appointment, the pair moved off to a village at

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a distance. But years afterwards it would not unfrequently happen—when she was feeling a bit worn and unhappy—perhaps undressing the children and putting them to bed, and Archie (as too often the case) staying out no one knew where—she would see the outline of Stephen's face strangely clear again, as if in the little porch of the Whinfield garden, and catch what he was saying. And then she would seem to understand his words, and even the very expressions of his face, in a wonderful way—and ever so much better than she did in the far days when he actually stood there and talked with her.

THE ANNALS OF A SLUM-FAMILY

WHEN I first knew Joe Green he was about twenty-two years of age. His younger brother Ike used to carry my bag when I arrived at the station at Smokeborough on my occasional visits to that town. Ike used to take me home with him to see his mother and sister and Joe. They lived in the wretchedest slums of Smokeborough—in the “Crofts” and the courts that lie back of them. I have never seen any worse slums anywhere than some of these courts. The hideous smoke, the soot raining down on damp winter days, the smells, the refuse, the grime and mouldy odour of the interiors, the hopeless vicious look of the faces (many of them), the yells, the fighting, the drunkenness—all made a most gloomy impression. The Greens were always on the move. Half the time they couldn’t pay their rent; and “moonlight flits” were frequent. I cannot recall all the places in which I have seen them. Sometimes after an absence of a month or two from the town I would have to hunt for quite a time before I could find them.

The father was dead. Joe was weakly, and

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hardly fit for work, and there was little or nothing coming in. At times their few sticks of furniture disappeared, and they would sleep—all four—crossways on one large bed. (They were short little people, fortunately—the slum-dwellers of two or three generations being hardly equal to the “monumental man” whom M. Taine discovered standing on the steps of the St. James’s Clubs.) Then when there was any money about—just now and then—the mother got drunk, lordly drunk. She was a funny little rattle-trap woman—a bit Irish, hopelessly untidy and dishevelled, not over moral; but full of gaiety and life, warm-hearted, plucky—with occasional bouts of tears—and not above “snaking” a loaf now and then, for the family table. When the small-pox was about, *she* was the woman the neighbours in the crofts sent for; she never refused a cry for help of that kind. “Lord! you can only die once,” she said; “what does it matter?”

But she *was* amusing. There used to be hanging on the wall of their little room an old coloured print of Landseer’s “Bolton in the Olden Time,” where the tenants of the abbey are bringing in game and fish, and laying them at the monk’s feet, and a little lap-dog is looking on at the proceedings. Mrs. Green would have it—and she used to explain with a twinkle in her eye which almost made you believe that she knew what nonsense she was talking—that this little lap-dog was the sacrificial lamb of God, and that while the men were offering stags and

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salmon to propitiate the priest, he was insisting and repeating that "nowt but t'blood o' t'lamb would satisfy him!" Then there was a picture of the Madonna, with two saints in the foreground, and the mystic legend *Ave Maria* below, which she interpreted as the advice of the elder man to the younger—given of course at the sight of so beautiful a woman—" (h)ave Maria."

Mary Anne, the girl, listened to these expositions with soft "dreaming eyes of wonder," and with perfect reliance on their authority.

She earned a little money sometimes, did Mrs. Green, by working for the Jews. It's not very good business at the best, working for the Jews, even in a government-inspected workshop—but working *out* for them is miserable. She used to work at "translating,"—translating men's worn-out coats into boys' new jackets. The trick of the thing is easy to see. You have to cut down the coat, cut out the worn parts, and stitch it all together again; but quickly, for goodness' sake, for there's only fourpence for a coat—at least from fourpence to sixpence is all that Mrs. Green used to get. It's a great business that translating, much favoured by the Jews, and many poor souls have themselves been translated while attending to it.

After a bout of "translating," she did get drunk sometimes, there was no doubt about it; then she would dance a kind of jig, and sing, and be quite hilarious; and very queer she looked too, on these occasions, with her beady little eyes

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and half bald head and upturned nose—as she revolved somewhat unsteadily on her axis. I remember one evening going with a companion to visit the Green family. We climbed the dirty old stair which led to their one room, and knocked, but there was no reply. At last I lifted the latch and looked in. It was getting very dusk, but I could see—or thought I saw—that the room was empty; no one there, only an old dress lying across the bed. We turned to go; but at that moment a hollow voice came from the depths of the room, and immediately in the uncertain light a figure staggered across the floor—half undressed, with thin dishevelled elf-locks flying, and strange wild moans and cries. It was Mrs. Green, drunk and in tears. The children were all out, she was alone and miserable, there was nothing to eat in the house, and I suppose she had felt that there was no alternative but to drink.

When Joe was about nineteen he met with an accident which ruined his chances of ever gaining a decent livelihood. The tall chimney of the cutlery works where he was employed fell. It was an awful affair. The chimney crashed through two or three storeys of workshops, killing and maiming numbers of young women and men and lads. Joe was saved from death by a great balk of timber which half fell, and then jammed itself over his head. But he was frightfully cut about the head, and his body was crushed, causing some internal damage which made it impossible

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for him ever after to do any work involving great effort or strain. His nerves too were so shaken that for years after—so his brother said—when ever there was a strong wind Joe would betake himself to the cellar or hide in some hole or corner out of sheer fright.

He was a very affectionate, soft-voiced lad, of a clinging disposition, too diffident and irresolute ever to make a success in the race of life, even if he had not been handicapped; utterly illiterate too, unable to read a single word, yet not without sense and shrewdness; the type of lad who, in more prosperous surroundings, would have been a general favourite—one of those kindly yielding natures who form the mortar of society, so to speak, where others, squarer perhaps and more solid, are “bricks.” But after the accident there was not much chance for Joe. The firm gave no compensation; as far as I know such a thing was not even talked about; the chimney was blown down by the *wind*. It was an Act of God, as they word it in the statutes. Joe was simply left to drift where he might—and that of course meant to drift into the public-house when he had a chance.

When sufficiently recovered to work a little, too shaken to go back to his old life, he picked up such odd jobs as he could do—errand running, boots at commercial inns, and light outside porter at railway stations; but his inability to read, combined with his poor health and strength, made him only a casual worker to the end of his days.

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Ike, the younger brother, was not unlike Joe in general disposition. He, too, was perfectly unable to read. Born before the days of School Boards he had never learnt—and never in after years was able to learn—more than his letters, notwithstanding many and pathetic endeavours to do so. With no education and no proper training in any trade, he too, like Joe, drifted down into a mere on-hanger of hotels and stations, and became a worker of the most casual kind for the rest of his life.

Yet these two lads—perhaps it was on account of their very ignorance—were singularly trustworthy. They belonged, as is the case with many of our slum-dwellers, to a period anterior to civilisation; and if they had some of the vices, had also the virtues of savagery. Their naively simple and familiar manners made it impossible not to treat them correspondingly; and I really believe it never entered into their heads to in any way deceive—or be otherwise than perfectly open to any one whom they had once learnt to regard as a friend.

For the rest there was in both their faces—and in that too of the little sister—that look of dumb pathos and suffering—the soft tense eyes, the pale complexion—which hardly belongs to the savage state, but which is seen so often in the children and young things, old before their time, of our great towns, and which lends to their faces so poignant an interest.

In the court where the Greens lived (when I

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first knew them), dwelt a terrible woman—a great big, brassy, lying female—with her daughter, who was a regular slut (though her mother affected a little finery). How they got their living is not recorded—not very satisfactorily, I fancy. But Joe drifted into their house, and became familiar there—too familiar; and then there was a baby; and then Joe had to marry the slut or pay to the baby. Joe's mother swore it *wasn't* his baby—as there were plenty of other visitors to the house whom it might be fathered on; but the slut's mother swore it was, and as she was much the bigger woman of the two, she got her way, and Joe married the slut. Mrs. Green got drunk, and danced her jig, and the baby's head was “washed in ale” by the courtyard and neighbours generally.

Joe—as he usually did—acquiesced in his destiny. He took a wretched little hovel in another yard not far off, and started family life—and in the course of seven or eight years had about the same number of children—eight, I think, altogether—all girls. Of course he was making only a very poor wage, mostly as outside porter at the station, and how he lived I hardly know. His wife was the most utter sloven. I used to call to see them occasionally, but I can safely say that I never remember seeing her doing anything—cleaning the house, washing the children, or mending their clothes. She generally sat, an untidy heap, with red hair and pock-marked face, by the fireside, while the

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babies crawled about the floor or over her ; the house was filthy, and the children were puny and sick with neglect. Mrs. Green, the elder, sometimes in the intervals of "translating" did a bit of sewing for her grandchildren—but I never could discover that their mother ever did a stitch of anything for them. Yet Joe would never have a word said (so his brother told me) against his wife.

In later years I did not see so much of the Green family. Ike got married, and did perhaps a trifle better than his brother. When I visited Smokeborough he always claimed his right to the black bag, and when at last it became disabled from active service, his devotion to it did not wane, but he insisted on having it, and it now rests from its labours, stored among the archives of his family. His mother was rather cut up when in course of time *he* married, for she was very fond of him. Perhaps it hastened her end—for she took to drinking more and more, and got more strange and tearful and unintelligible. She suffered a good deal, too, from some internal complaint, one which no doubt increased, and was increased by, her tendency to drink ; and about a year afterwards she died.

The little sister, too, was married soon after this, to a man who was actually in regular work—the most fortunate of the family. But Joe's wife did not long survive her mother-in-law. She succumbed to a fever, and left the unfortunate Joe alone with his eight children—or with the six who

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had so far survived the ordeal of slum childhood. Joe did not marry again, as widowers usually do under such circumstances; but his eldest girl, who was now eleven, became housewife and nurse of the poor little things that remained. Joe himself was now constantly ill. Drinking habits fastened themselves more and more upon him, and the state of the household was even worse than before. If it had not been for the goodness of a "traveller" they must all have gone into the workhouse.

I know something of commercial life and the meanness and dirty tricks of trade. But even a life of commercial travelling cannot destroy the romance of humanity in some breasts. This man, of whom I speak, was a traveller in tea, and a chapel-goer too, but for some years before had employed Joe as porter of his goods when he visited the town. During all this time he never deserted Joe, but found work for him when there was really little to find, paid for work which he often could not do, and found a permanent place for him to sweep out the little office which he himself only used twice a week; and at last, when Joe sank into permanent ill-health and disability, allowed him ten shillings a week.

Even that, however, would not support a family of seven—rent and doctors' bills included—and at last Joe, ill and miserable, was fain to go into the workhouse, and take the children with him. He only stayed a few weeks. As soon as he was a little stronger he came out

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again. He could not bear the confinement and the regulations. The children were of the same mind. Though looking far better in health for the change, the whole family voted for freedom, and returned with joy to the old life of privation and dirt. Joe lasted a few weeks longer, then took to his bed and died—with complications of bronchitis, asthma, and kidney troubles.

Shortly before he died I happened to look in. There was only one bed—and that on the floor—for the whole family: and across that he was lying, with his head propped up against the wall. There was no chair—and the floor was so filthy I could not sit upon it—so I contented myself with squatting on my heels near him. His voice was low, and he could only talk a little—yet there was the same easy unoffending and unoffended look in his face as of old. He had taken a house (or hovel), next to the very one in which his mother had died—and seemed to think it not unlikely that he should die in it. As to the workhouse, he had no fault to find with the food, &c., but he could not bear the “regulations,” and would rather die outside than live in it.

So outside Joe died; and the five girls (only five now) were captured—little wild things—amid tears and struggles. The traveller (bless his heart) took one girl into his service, and arranged for most of the others to go into various orphanages and institutions; and so down different channels, separated from each

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other, and from the tender ties of kinship, they drifted at last into the great world.

Such are the slender annals of a little family taken at random out of the slums of one of our big towns. I have written them down very briefly, keeping as close as I could to the actual facts. They may be very trivial, but surely there is something infinitely pathetic in the thought of these lives, which are, so to speak, born to be smothered beneath the weight of our mercantile civilisation. Perhaps some day it will be difficult for people to realise how these things could be.

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A TALE OF INDIAN LIFE

I

ON a mountain side, in the shade of a great tamarind tree, sat Narayan and Ganesha. It was on the west coast of India. The dry, hot ground was full of aromatic scents; bushes with big white thorns upon them grew around, and cactuses, and shrubs of white jessamine, whose myriad flowers sent fitful wafts of delicious fragrance along the air. Overhead the huge tree, with its mighty arms and feathery leaves, afforded a splendid shelter from the sun. Beneath, among the dead leaves, occasionally a lizard rustled, or a little grey-brown squirrel with three yellow stripes on its back.

Narayan was a well-made youth of about twenty, bright-eyed, with something in his face of the squareness and decision of the Mahratta type. Ganesha, his companion, or Ganesh as they called him for short, was rather younger, darker in complexion and of a milder, more meditative expression. The two were fast friends; and often before, in the heat of the day, had they come to this very spot to rest—sometimes to sleep. Now, they were deep in conversation.

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Before them lay a wonderful scene. The mountain sloped steeply from where they sat, and over the lower foothills at a distance of some miles stretched the sea, calm and blue, and dotted with islands, against whose rocky background glided here and there a lateen-sailed boat. To the right, the shore of the mainland sweeping round in great curves seemed to enclose a bay, whose extreme point in the far distance was occupied by a great city—a city whose motley-crowded streets have for centuries been a meeting point of East and West—the city of Bombay.

Below, at the foot of the hill on which the friends sat, was the village from which they came—looking certainly, from above, more like a cluster of dead palm-leaves than anything else. When you descended into it, it was a mere collection of thatched huts, with a tiny little conical-roofed temple or shrine in the midst of it. The villagers there, herding their humped cows among the woods, or growing their little store of “dhol,” or of rice, on favourable patches, led a meagre scant life, almost dream-like in its monotony, far away from the great currents of the world. It was difficult to believe that only fifteen miles or so distant (in a direct line) lay that great centre of civilisation—so slight was the communication with it by sea, and so round-about and distant the journey by land. Some miles away inland, on the hills, there was indeed a high-road, but the only access to that was by footpaths through

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woods and rice-fields; farther still—a long distance off—was a railroad, but few of the good folk had seen this, though all had heard of the monstrous dragon which climbed the steep and disappeared into the bowels of the mountain, leaving its hot breath trailing over the trees and rocks.

For the rest, the visits of a few native traders brought occasional tidings from outside, and perhaps once a year an English collector or magistrate—the only Englishman they ever saw—would ride round that way, and delay to converse with the headman of the village—to assess a tax or listen to a string of complaints and grievances.

It was a poor enough life, but bringing with it some of those consolations which come from the rule of unbroken custom—simple habits of friendliness and helpfulness among neighbours, a dreamy apathy which dulled the edge of misfortunes when they came, and an unswerving belief in the gods. To most of the villagers the English and their ways (as dimly heard of or experienced) were an inscrutable dispensation. Why these people should come and tax the very necessities of life, and break up the old customs and usages and make new and vexatious laws—and all to no purpose, since they made everybody miserable and never looked happy themselves—was indeed a puzzle; but perhaps it was only one among many other things which they could not comprehend.

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To Narayan, however, the matter was somewhat different. An intelligent lad, and one who had gone to school at a larger village, he was not unwilling to think for himself a little, and to entertain some of the new ideas that were already spreading over the land; and to him the English and their wonderful civilisation appeared as a promise of wealth and a vista of possibilities which were not only attractive in themselves, but suggested a likely means of escape from the poverty and monotony of the old village life and the crippling pressure (which he was beginning to feel) of the caste rules.

As he and Ganesh sat there, Bombay itself, in the slight afternoon haze, was barely visible; but you could see faintest perpendicular lines and a twinkle from some high roof which showed where it was—and the long stretch of water, the silvery clouds on the far horizon, and the huge concave of blue above, all conjoined to give an effect of dreamy beauty—as of some immense blue crystal into which you gazed. Yet strange and ominous, and giving the lie as it were, to the whole scene, was an appearance which could not but rivet attention—a great cloud of Egyptian darkness from behind the city, rising up on high and with ragged edges impending over it, as it might be some monstrous dragon. It looked like the filmy feathery core you see within the substance of an agate. It was the smoke from the manufacturing quarter of the city.

The sight of it caused Ganesh to shudder. It

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was not the first time, of course, that he had seen it; but to-day it looked more detestable than ever—like some devil-stain on the shining garment of a god.

Narayan was urging, as he had urged before, that they should leave the village and go to try their fortunes in the great Babel.

"But what help should it bring to us to go there," said Ganesh, "where they are for ever making evil clouds and darkness?"

"What help is it to remain here?" replied the other. "You know what our life is—a little more rice or fish one year, a little less another, a festival of Minakshi, a visit of some reciter of stories, a little gossip and backbiting—you know it all. Never will it be any different. Why not go to the city and try our fortune in the ways of the white 'sahibs'? To earn money there is easy; but here it will always be the same."

"The Brahmin says there is an evil spirit, an Asura, in these white folk which will bring ruin on them and those who mix with them."

"It is strange, then, that the white folk should prosper so, whatever they do."

"To me they are hateful," continued Ganesh. "Last time when the white sahib came by and spoke to our headman, I watched his face. There was no kindness in it; he did not smile—it was like a piece of wood. And when Dinkar and Shripat and Uttam Das and the others came round and spoke of the gods it

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seemed as if he had no hearing and did not understand."

"Yet what can they not do if they will?" said Narayan, returning to his point. "That dark shade in front of the white palaces—you can just see it" (and he pointed towards Bombay)—"those are the masts of a hundred ships; and each ship is big as a hundred dwellings, and holds more men and women and children than all our village. You have seen them, Ganesh, creeping like little beetles past the light tower; yet they are as big as I have said—and swiftly over the sea they go, as many leagues in a few days as a runner would run in a month."

"But what is all that, if the people themselves are cruel, and if they forget the gods. Is it not true that they eat beef, which only the lowest Pariahs eat, and, since they are never satisfied, kill the bulls that are sacred to Brahma? and do they not leave their parents and pay no respect to them when they are white-haired and aged? No, they are hateful to me—why should we not rest and be good to one another while we live, and so dwell in the sight of the gods till we too pass to the blessed feet of Siva?"

"But they, too, Ganesh, have their own gods, in whose sight they live."

"Nay, Narayan—I do not understand certainly as well as you, but to me it seems their gods are cruel as themselves. My father says they sacrifice to a god who was angry with men and wanted to kill them all; till at the

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last he killed his own son instead, and then he was satisfied. They must ever be killing something. These fighting ships they build in order to kill people, and what animal sacred to what god do they not slay, if only to fill their bellies? And as to that dragon-cloud which hangs over the city, a poison-dew they say falls from it, and those who live in its shadow die."

They were sitting, as they talked, in that meditative yet alert attitude which the Indian is so fond of—with their heels gathered under them, and their arms resting on their knees. Neither of them, in the heat, wore any garment, other than the usual peasant-cloth about the loins, but Ganesh carried a silver bangle on one arm. The beauty of youth was in their faces and dark eyes—the beauty which everywhere, and in all ages and places, marks the completed appearance of the human soul in the world, before it is tied and taken captive by the things which do not belong to it—and the vast crystal sphere within which they sat, and into which they gazed, seemed like some great kindly mirror of destiny, of which they themselves were a portion. Little did they foresee (though Ganesh to some extent foreboded) the meaning for them of that dark cloud which rose within its farthest depths.

Narayan paused a moment for a reply. Then—picking up a tamarind pod from the ground, and disengaging the sweet-acid fruit within—he

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said : " Blameless, I certainly do not call these people, yet it may be that we shall get help from them. For in what state are we to-day? Our fathers and forefathers—for how many generations who can tell?—have lived without any change, and everything is done to-day just the same as it was hundreds of years ago. If you cut a peepul tree even by accident—O what a fuss! What will the gods do? What will they not do? Whether it is a good custom or whether it is a bad custom, it is the same. If it was a bad custom hundreds of years ago, it is a bad custom now; and if it was a good custom then, it will perhaps have become bad now, but it is followed just the same. Everything is fixed in one pattern, which cannot be altered. This is no use—this is no life for a man; he cannot break his caste, he must not cross the sea, he must think the same thoughts, follow the same trade, do all the same things as his fathers. If he gets a few possessions his relations and caste-people crowd round and live on him, so that he is dragged down again just where he was. Nothing can ever move on. We are like fish that go round and round in the same pool in which we were born. Then these white people come. They cut the way open for us. At least we can go and see what kind of life it is out there in the great world which they have made."

"But how, Narayan, can we go away from the village? We cannot ask leave of our

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parents, for they would not grant it; and if we should go in secret and without their leave they would perish of shame and grief."

"Nay, dear Ganesh, I do not think so. For already it is different from what it used to be. Thousands are leaving the villages and going into the great towns and learning new trades and eating strange food, and doing other things which used to be forbidden, and which still are forbidden in the villages, and it is not thought that they are breaking their caste—or if it is, they are excused. Only in our little village they do not understand yet, but before long they will understand."

Thus these two children talked. And the younger, though having in some ways the best of the argument, felt himself yielding to the spirit and enthusiasm of the elder. Moreover he could not bear the thought of crippling Narayan, who, he knew, longed to go and yet would not go without him. For the hearts of the two were joined together in a bond of habitual companionship, and it hardly occurred to either of them to do anything without the other. And for himself, Ganesha, even if he had some misgiving about the city life, was ready to take any risk as long as he had his dear friend to rely on.

And as they talked, already the afternoon began to turn towards evening, the heat diminished, the haze cleared away, and in the transparent light Bombay gleamed forth like a fairy

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city trembling on the farthest edge of the waters. Faintly the white column of the lighthouse was seen, rising apparently out of the sea; then to the right the white buildings and spires of the European city, proudly glittering and sparkling in light; in front of them the forest of masts of which Narayan had spoken; while farther still to the right a strange combination of palm trees and tall chimneys made itself just visible, backed by some higher ground inland. But the pall of smoke had disappeared, or was rapidly disappearing (for the day's work was nearly over); and with it the remainder of Ganesha's doubts and hesitations also departed and resolved themselves into air.

II

So they left the village.

Quietly and without letting any one know they slipped off very early one morning and took their way over the hills; for they intended to reach the great city on foot—a journey of some days round the head of the bay.

The footpath by which they would gain the high-road led them, after a march of some miles, past a little shrine, where dwelt a kind of hermit or holy man. Narayan had been there once before. Ganesh felt desirous of paying the place a visit. Both thought that it would be well to offer a sacrifice here at the outset of their journey.

The path ran along the brow of a steep wood;

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and a little above it on a rocky platform was the tiny temple, itself partly hollowed out of the rock, partly built up with stone and plaster. Round it grew a tangle of creepers and foliage; but just in front an opening gave a wide view to South and West over the tops of the trees, showing here and there a village on the hills, and beyond, a glimpse of the ocean.

The old man who was the hermit-priest of this place had dwelt here for many years. He was greatly honoured by the simple villagers round, and indeed loved—for they knew that things would go well with them as long as he was near. Every day they brought him what food he needed, but that was little. Sometimes they would come to him for words of help or consolation in their troubles. Sometimes (but rarely) he would visit them, and fortunate was the sick man whom he tended, for he would surely recover.

The two friends approached the front of the shrine, and making an obeisance, stood there with the palms of their hands placed together. On the back wall was a rude painting of the god Siva in an attitude of meditation. At the side of the shrine was a second recess in which the holy man dwelt. Almost immediately he came out. He also placed his palms together in salutation of the god and of them, and looking at them smiled encouragingly; but there was in his dark eyes a piercing beauty which seemed to penetrate to their very souls.

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They had brought flowers and frankincense.

The hermit-priest receiving them placed the flowers in some jars in front of the god; then taking a red-hot ember from a little fire which was burning in his own recess, he strewed the frankincense upon it and a sweet cloud went up in the shrine, while he recited a few verses from the Vedas.

Then the two friends sat down on the rocky platform, looking out over the world—and presently the old man joining them, asked whither they were going.

So Narayan told him all.

And the old man said, "Why do you wish to go among these people, these English? What help can they give you?"

"They are great and powerful," replied Narayan, "and we think we shall surely gain something from them."

"Great certainly are their powers," said the hermit; "but it is so little, all that they know—so little. They are like children, playing with their steam-engines, and all the while the grown-up people nod and wink to each other over their heads, and they do not even know that there are any grown-up people."

The two youths looked at each other.

"But is it not a grand thing," said Narayan, venturing to contest the point—"is it not a grand thing to be able to skim so rapidly over the sea and the land?"

"If they are not happy and blessed in one

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place, how will it help them to be able to pass quickly to another place? Will they be happier there?"

"There! that is just what I say," said Ganesh proudly.

"Will playing with dirt and things dug out of the earth ever make them happy?"

"And all the while" (he continued as if talking to himself) "there is that great ocean of bliss within over which they might sail, where the Sun ever shines and fierce hurricanes come not; and there is that wonderful Space in the heart, so pure, so boundless, which is greater far than the space they dwell in; and even by these a man may travel in an instant through the whole universe, and yet never move from his place."

"But go," he went on, seeing that they did not understand; "it is necessary that you should leave the old life, and it is good that you should go into the world and see all that there is there. Therefore, what is necessary for you to do, that fulfil; but when you are tired of the world, my children, come back to me, and it may be that what you need you will find."

There was something in the old man's words which woke a slumbering response in the two young hearts. They did not understand them in any clear sense. They had certainly never heard the village priest speak like that. Yet the words gave some kind of expression and satisfaction to that deep religious instinct which

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is inborn in almost every Hindu mind, however uncultured—and which marks off the Indian mass-peoples so distinctly from those of the West. Narayan and Ganesha felt an unspoken reverence for the holy man; they were sensible of a strong attraction towards him, and they could not but think that he took a special interest in them; but there was no question of delaying now—the journey begun had to be fulfilled—the day was already wearing on—and with a silent obeisance, as at first, they left him, and continued their way down the woodland path.

III

And two or three days afterwards they found themselves entering Bombay from the landward side.

What a sight! In the interest and excitement of it, the hermit-priest and his little shrine were soon forgotten. All that the friends had imagined fell far short of the scene that met them as they entered the old town—the innumerable throngs of people, the innumerable life, ancient and modern, familiar and unfamiliar, Eastern and Western, all mingled together as in a kaleidoscope of the world—the narrow crowded streets with rows and rows of shops on either hand, little open cabins forming work-places and sale-shops in one, the hammering of brass and copper, gold and silver, carving and

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sawing of wood, forging of ironwork and shoeing of horses, making of lovely little cabinets and ornaments, weaving and embroidery, sweetmeat and fruit shops, money-lenders' dens; warehouses of European wares, clocks and watches, paraffin lamps, pianos; trams and electric lights; Hindu temples and shrines, a bathing tank with bathers, mosques with minarets, a fakir sitting cross-legged under an archway with a little admiring crowd round him, a policeman in uniform, be vies of Parsee women with olive complexions and handsome eyes and delicate coloured silks falling to their feet, Parsee and Bunya merchants with tall black brimless hats, Mahratta fisherwomen with bare knees and feet such as Narayan and Ganesha had often seen in the villages along their own coast, naked water-carriers and coolies, high-turbaned men from North and Central India, Jack tars, red-coated soldiers and English lady tourists.

These last—perhaps more than anything else—riveted the attention of the two friends. They had seen an occasional English man before, but never an English woman. These straw-hatted, neatly shod spinsters, with their cool inquiring manners, fascinated them. It was not that they thought them beautiful. On the contrary, compared with the lovely Parsee women, these seemed wanting in charm, and the white skins looked cold and uncomfortable, as if some more natural outer integument had been removed. But it was something in the hard grey

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eyes, the restless movements and the tin-pipe voices, which by its very strangeness attracted them, as being unlike anything they had associated with the idea of woman before, and almost suggesting a new class of human being.

And then there were immense dwelling-houses, five or six storeys high, with abundant balconies and casements of wood and glass, and apparently full of people; and then, as they passed into the modern and official part of the city, great buildings still higher and built of solid stone, and still more full of people. Post-offices and banks and churches and hotels, and wide streets planted with trees, and modern European shops with all manner of unknown articles in them; and docks, and quays, and esplanades, and the lighthouse, whose light they had so often seen, and the innumerable shipping.

A wonderful sight it certainly was—this great and endless world into which they had suddenly come out of the retirement of their little village! And this was what they had so often dimly descried across the water, and puzzled themselves as to what it all meant; and even now, now that they were in the midst of it, they were not much the wiser. As they stood on one of the Bunders, or quays, a cab drove up with two white ladies and a gentleman in it, and behind it another cab packed with luggage, the drivers lashing their horses. The occupants of the first cab tumbled hastily out and paid the drivers. Men rushed up, and the boxes and the whole

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party were bundled down some steep steps into a small steamboat, which soon went snorting across the harbour in the direction of a big vessel with red funnels and black hull. Huge drays laden with bales lumbered along, no one knew whither. On one of the maidans, or open places, a game of cricket was going on; the ball flew hither and thither; men struck it and ran away; then other men threw it apparently at the men who were running.

Everybody, everything, seemed in a hurry. Trams and vehicles along the roads, trains on the railways, steamboats in the water, people in the street; everything, everybody, seemed in pursuit of something, something which at all costs must be immediately attained. No one stopped to ask the youths where they were going, what they were doing there—or to offer them any help. After their little village it was all so strange, indeed terrifying. The world seemed to revolve with such force, such irresistible power. What indeed was the meaning of it all?

They had already found lodgings—temporary at least—with some of their own caste-people, on the outskirts of the old town. Tired they returned there to rest. Thus two or three days passed. Then the first excitement began to wear off. But the sense of the immense size of the place, the rush, the hurry, and the struggle for existence—that, instead of wearing off, only increased. It became necessary to seek for work. The folk with whom they lodged were friendly

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enough and introduced them among others; but everywhere it was the same tale. There were thousands of clerks and employees in the post-office, and on the railways and docks; and there were thousands waiting for employment; for every vacancy there were many candidates ready; for the better situations one had to pass examinations.

Ganesh, with his sensitive clinging nature, was terrified—the crowds at the railway stations, going one knew not whither, the noises, day and night, the immense city, the impassive insolent English, the feeling of being left without help, each by himself, each for himself. Even Narayan was nervous. And when the days went by without employment the sense of isolation and anxiety increased.

At last their friends advised them to try a cotton mill.

They had held off from this last resort as long as they could, and in fact had each avoided proposing it to the other, knowing well enough their own feelings on the matter; but now it seemed wise, perhaps necessary, to give way. A firm with a long English name—something ending in “Spinning and Manufacturing Company”—was recommended to them as likely to be in want of employees; and thither they went. It was a long grey building with many windows and a tall chimney, and as they stood in the street outside a horrible strident noise came from it.

In the office they found the manager. He

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was a Parsee with a long forward line of nose and a long backward line of eyelid, and a face all wrinkled in compartments, like crocodile skin, and he wore a round black cap and a black alpaca coat. Narayan, as spokesman, explained their errand, adding (what indeed was unnecessary to explain) that they had just come from the country. The Parsee took in at a glance the fact that they were rustics, and also that they were intelligent above the average; and concluded that with a little training they would be quite useful material to grind profit out of. He engaged them, offering the sum of four annas or about 6d. a day, which, he explained, considering they were quite unskilled, was a very handsome, almost unprecedented offer; and indeed they were rather surprised at his generosity.

Nevertheless when they stood out in the street again their spirits were by no means proportionately elated. The horrible noise, still going on, and which had been worse during those few minutes in the office, the little glimpse of dismal figures going to and fro, the look and the voice of the manager himself and his way of addressing them, all left a terrible sense of disheartenment. As they stood there the chimney overhead was belching out huge clouds of thick smoke, from which every now and then a suffocating waft came past them. The two friends had bought themselves English jackets of some light material, and were wearing these, while on the lower part of their bodies they

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had the usual muslin wraps. In this motley garb, half English, half Hindu, hampered by unaccustomed sleeves, pelted with smoke, and dinned by noises, standing there in the shadow of a factory on the verge of the native town, between a fringe of coco-palms and the cloud of smoke which was blighting their great fronds, they felt like hybrids, hardly knowing to what world they belonged—they felt sufficiently uncomfortable, one might almost say miserable.

Said Narayan: "We can stay here awhile till we have learned a little English and fitted ourselves for clerk work. Then we shall do better."

"Had we not better return home now," put in Ganesh pleadingly; "we shall never be happy here." And his looks corroborated his words.

"When should we ever gain four annas a day at home, even if we lived as long as Danu. You remember Danu," continued Narayan, trying to cheer his friend up, "who was promised a long life on account of his penances, and even Indra with his thunderbolts could not kill him, though he knocked him to a jelly. But think what four annas a day comes to—in a month, in a year"—and he proceeded to count up the mighty sum.

"What are these things?" suddenly exclaimed Ganesh with a shudder, as two large blacks descended—one on his face, the other on his arm. He did not at first associate them with the cloud of smoke overhead.

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"Perhaps they are those Asuras you were speaking about," said the other with a twinkle in his eye, "who, the Brahmin said, come upon all who mix with the white folk."

"Do not jest about the Asuras, Narayan, nor about Indra—we know not what may come upon us."

Ganesh was perturbed. But Narayan by degrees infused some of his courage into him, and they rejoined their friends in the town in better spirits, and having decided at any rate to make trial of the mill.

IV

Some forty years ago, during the American Civil War and the cotton famine in Lancashire, it occurred to some capitalists that a good thing might be made by the transplanting of cotton mills from Manchester to India. Hand-weaving had of course existed in India from remotest times, and some of a very elaborate kind; but the majority of goods produced there were cotton "sarīs" of a very ordinary quality, such as could easily be reproduced by machinery.

Two advantages would be gained by the change. The cost of transport of the raw material and of the manufactured goods would be greatly lessened, and the wages of labour would be reduced to a minimum. The only question was whether the "native" would adapt

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himself to the service of machinery so kindly and joyfully as the white wage-earner. Experiment soon afforded a satisfactory answer. And in a short time cotton-mills began to spring up all over the Indian continent—especially at Bombay, where at the present time some forty or more exist.

It is evident that if you can get coolie labour for 6d. and 8d. a day in India, when you would have to pay 2s. 6d. or 3s. for the same in England, the increased profit, say in a mill of 1000 workers, is going to be very large—sufficient to cover by a long way any little increase of expenses in other directions. And the service of machinery is now for the most part so simple an affair that the “untutored mind” of the native Indian (as of the Chinaman or the Malay-man) is almost as competent to it as the school-bred slum-dweller of Manchester. The justness of this reckoning is shown by the fact that the dividends declared in Bombay, up to a few years ago, have run commonly at 25 to 50 per cent., and in cases even higher.

The sight that Narayan and Ganesh saw when on the morrow of their interview they were introduced into the mill was certainly amazing enough. There were the spinning-jennies with their hundreds, thousands, of spindles whirling in endless dance (like myriads of living creatures); there were the huge reels of raw stuff slowly turning (like Destiny) as they yielded the material which was ultimately to array itself

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in all shapes and colours; there were the looms with swift-flying shuttles, so rapid, so complex in movement that it was impossible to see what was going on; there were great shafts, and cogs and bands; there was a sickening smell of oil and a hot atmosphere, hazy and suffocating with cotton-dust, through which the vista of machinery seemed endless; and penetrating all, the terrible scream of the wheels, which made conversation or even speech impossible. And then up and down through the midst of this chaos (most amazing!) went crowds of their own countrymen and women—Mahratta girls with bare arms and shoulders, and big ear-rings and nose-rings, and bare knees and feet, carrying trays of spindles on their heads, and thin, thin men, with only their loin-cloth on, oiling the machines, or mending bands or lifting bales, and mere children of ten to twelve, naked, serving before the great living Idols, picking up the broken threads and tying them—even while the relentless wheels ran round.

But over all seemed to rest a curse. Listless, impassive, weary, were the faces. If Narayan and Ganesh were accustomed to the quietude of the Indian peasant, still they were not accustomed to the sadness which met them in this spectacle. The faces and forms brought vividly before them the village life which they had left—the girls and girl-mothers sitting on the raised earth-platforms before their cabins, looking after the children, the men coming in from

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the rice-fields with mattocks over their shoulders, the village festivals and dances, the scanty, monotonous, yet simple, open-air, free life—and now all freedom, all quietude, gone, for the sake of a few annas a day!

As to Ganesh, if the hurry and scramble of the streets generally had made him feel miserable, this was appalling; and again the question forced itself on him—What is it all for?

But there was no time for thinking. They had to learn their new duties. He, the younger, oily rag in hand, was put to some simple cleaning under the superintendence of an old grey-beard; Narayan (with better capacity in him, as the Manager considered) was set at once in attendance on a loom.

So they settled down to work. Weeks passed, even two or three months. But they did not settle down to the thought of remaining. Narayan, in his spare time, was working away at English. Ganesh too was learning a little. Both were looking forward to release from their vile durance. Narayan certainly felt interested in the machinery. He soon picked up the leading ideas of its construction and handling. It seemed likely enough that he would get on. But the atmosphere, the life, the insulting treatment were intolerable to him. Already his feeling about the English and their ways, and about the advantages of Bombay and modern life, were suffering a change. Besides, as far

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as life in the mill was concerned, he feared for his friend, who looked ill and out of place.

"All this hurry, what is it for?" said Ganesh one day—"all these miles and miles of cloth, where do they go to?"

"Into the villages all over the mainland, I suppose," said Narayan, "to make 'saris' for everybody."

"But in the villages they are already making 'saris' by hand, and have made them for centuries."

"Not so much now."

"How is that?"

"Because this steam-cloth is spreading everywhere, being cheaper, and the village weaving is dying out."

"But if it is a little cheaper, they say it does not wear so well, and so perhaps it is not really cheaper."

"True, Ganesh; but the people are poor—and if a thing is less money to buy than another, they will buy that, even though it will not last so long as the other."

"To all those, then, who used to work in the villages, what has happened?"

"Some have come into the towns, to work like us, and others in the villages remain behind, and have nothing to do."

"Then, Narayan, if they have nothing to do, they have no money, and the villages are poor. Is that why the famines there are worse than they used to be?"

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"It is one reason, perhaps," replied Narayan meditatively.

"But why does the Queen of England arrange things so," continued Ganesh, "since that the people should be strong and healthy is much better, and that they should make their 'saris' themselves, even if they do cost one or two 'pice' more. And to work in the villages was sweet and desirable, but to work here is madness."

"O Ganesh, my dear, the Queen knows little and cares little about us. But the men who build these places and set these wheels going, they it is who cause these miles of cloth to be made. And I see now why they do it—it is not that it may be any good or advantage to us, but because they make money, and money, and always more money by it; and that is why they offer us just enough wages to make us leave the villages and come and work for them—and no more; and that is why the wheels rush round so fast and there is no rest, because the faster the wheels go the more money for themselves."

"And they do not care who are killed or wounded," said Ganesh; "every day almost that we have been here there has been an accident to some one."

"No, they do not care."

"They talk of us Hindus," continued Ganesh, "that we go to the feast of Jagannath and throw ourselves under the wheels of the car;

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and they say that for our good they have forbidden these sacrifices ; and yet they are sacrificing us every day in hundreds—more than ever were sacrificed to Jagannath—to their own god of Money ; and no one forbids that.”

“ And those that sacrifice themselves to Jagannath,” said Narayan, chiming in, “ they do it of themselves, out of the fulness of their hearts, to show that they are nothing, nothing before the glory of Vishnu ; but those who are sacrificed to this god of the white sahibs, they are slaughtered by force, and for no good, except that the sahib may have a little more money.”

“ It is all lies and deceit,” said Ganesh.

“ Well,” said the other, “ let us stay no longer ; let us go, even in a few days, and get away from this place.”

“ And we will go—will we not?—to the Sahibs who rule the place—not to that man, the Manager, for he will not listen—but to the Sahibs to whom the mill belongs, and tell them the truth about it. Perhaps they do not know all that happens here.”

And Ganesha’s eyes looked large and pleading. For he really thought, in his innocence, poor boy, that perhaps these men would listen.

Thus they talked, these two children, little understanding (even as any of us) the full drift of the words they uttered—planning to leave in a few days or a week, as if it was their will so to do, when already Destiny had forestalled

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them; and for one of them at least her thread was severed.

For even the next morning, while Narayan at his loom was leaning over and joining a broken thread, he heard a piercing cry. Instantly, with his almost maternal instinct, he was looking up, to see that his friend was safe.

The last he had seen of Ganesh, the latter had been cleaning the bearings of the driving shaft which ran along the top of the room, only a few feet from the wall-side—leaning to one side over his ladder to reach his work.

Thither Narayan looked. There was the ladder, but Ganesh was not on it. For a moment Narayan thought he must have descended. Then, the next, he saw a filmy circle about the shaft, as if something, some rags, were being whirled on it. (The shaft was making some hundreds of revolutions a minute.) Faces, open-mouthed, of stolid workers were already turning that way; odd horrible marks were appearing on the wall.

A strange sensation came upon him—almost as if he were leaving the body. Instantly, without a word, dropping his thread, everything, he rushed for the engine-house. As he did so a wave of ugly groans and cries broke round the great mill-room. It was the men and women waking up to what had happened; and the sounds of it haunted Narayan to his dying day.

He dashed through the room along the row of looms. It was a long way—perhaps a

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hundred yards in all—to reach the engine-house. Oh, how he ran! he could not have believed he could run so fast. A stupid old man who filled the gangway in front of him, walking oblivious with his back towards Narayan—he pushed violently aside. He heard a curse from him as he flew onwards. In a narrow corridor between two rooms he met a girl with a tray of bolts and screws on her head. Her indifferent senseless look as she stared at him, without making the least effort to get out of the way, her protruding lower lip, her huge nose-ring—he saw it all beforehand, wondering how he should get past. But he dipped his head beneath the tray, gave the girl a little push, and it was done. Then down a step-ladder—how he knew not—taking it almost at a leap. Already he became aware that he was shouting “Stop, stop,” at the top of his voice; and then he was in the engine-house. The engineer was there—how lucky! He saw Narayan at once, and understood—Narayan saw that he understood—in fact the steam was already off, and the engine slowing. Narayan said something—he didn’t know what—then turned and rushed back again at the same pace.

When he reached the scene of the accident the shaft was already stopping. He saw Ganesh quite plainly, carried slowly round with a fitful jerk. It was awful. The wall, the whitewashed wall, was streaming with blood—great splashes, and what looked like dabs of flesh. Ganesh was

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pinned by the neck and shoulders (somehow one end of his garment had got entangled in the shaft); the rest of his body was quite bare; his feet were completely gone—dashed against the wall at each revolution.

Narayan looked. Already two fresh ladders were up against the wall, and two men on them were lifting and disentangling the poor broken body. (It was indeed like a scene in the Crucifixion—how tenderly they held the seeming lifeless form!—and others coming from below assisted.) Narayan saw that for the moment he could be of no use, and he sank down in a kind of swoon, and with a feeling as if the blood was gushing from his mouth.

The next he knew, he was standing over the body, as it lay on the ground at the ladder foot. Men were binding the stumps below the knee with cotton bandages, tight, tight, for the terrible loss of blood. To the astonishment of all Ganesh was not only alive, but even conscious. He plainly recognised Narayan, and his eyes followed him with a strange wistful gaze. Narayan knelt, sat on the ground by him, held his hand, while the bandaging was being completed. Then—a conveyance having been called—they carried him down and settled him in it as best they could. Narayan got in with him, and so they drove off to the hospital.

He was taken at once to a ward, and disposed on a pallet; but nothing, nothing could be done. He was too far gone. There seemed to

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be no pain; the poor body was simply knocked senseless. It was too weak to feel anything. Just now and then, and with difficulty, Ganesh spoke. He told Narayan to "tell his parents"; he charged him to leave Bombay and the white people, and go back among his own. Then he was silent. Narayan sat with his hand in his friend's—Ganesha's eyes clung to him for a long time. Then they closed—only opening rarely, and each time more dimly. And in an hour or two he was dead.

V

A day or two after, Narayan went back to the mill—not to work. He went into the office. He could hear the machinery running as usual. Everything seemed to be just the same. The Manager uttered a few phrases of empty condolence. He suavely suggested some rashness on Ganesha's part—youth and inexperience of course. He breathed no word of the firm's responsibility, or of any compensation to the relatives; then, as if that matter was done with, he passed on to Narayan himself with a light rebuke for having absented himself for a couple of days without any notice; and said he would pass that over if he liked to come again tomorrow.

Narayan was furious. He flamed out, "What business have you to put an inexperienced youth

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to such work, without proper instruction and care? The whole disaster is your fault. . . . Shafts, as you know very well, ought not to be painted. They should be of polished steel. This one was painted. If it had been polished it would not have caught his clothing."

"It is very kind of you to tell me my business, and whether shafts should be painted or polished," replied he of the alpaca jacket; and the long line of his eyelid looked longer as he half closed his eyes with a little sneer.

"You try to throw the blame on the poor lad who is dead, when it is your fault. What are you going to do, what is the firm going to do, to make some reparation to his relatives?" Narayan was thinking partly that if he could get even a small sum for the parents, it would be something, something to make them feel that their son had been cared for, that his death was regretted—partly he was determined not to let the firm escape all responsibility in that mean way.

"You had better ask the firm what it is going to do. I am only a poor Manager, you know"—and he threw a wink and a chuckle across to a red-nosed, slipshod-looking Englishman of about thirty-seven years of age, who was sitting at another desk.

This was the only Englishman Narayan had seen about the place. He was the son of one of the English Directors—probably put into this berth because he was fit for no other.

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Narayan knew it was no good speaking to him. "Who are the Directors?" he asked quite abruptly.

The Manager took up a paper and read a list of names and addresses. Three were English, and living in England; one, also English, lived on the Malabar Hill—he might or might not be at home. Two were Parsees, but their places of residence were a long way out. "You had better," he continued, "go and see Mr. Hobman, the solicitor to the firm. He has a large interest in it, and generally acts as proxy for the English Directors. You could not do better than see him."

Narayan went out. He remembered Ganesha's words—perhaps the Sahibs did not know what happened in the mill. It seemed to him—though not with great hopes for the result—that he would go and see Mr. Hobman. He went. He was shown into an ante-room, and presently the solicitor entered—a nervous, half-Dutch-looking little man with brownish skin and restless eyes and movements, rather snappy. He seemed a little surprised at the interviewer and the subject of the interview; but his cue was plain enough. He was not a Director. Oh yes! he acted for some of them sometimes; but this was a case which would have to come before a full Board meeting. Besides, he could not give much hope of consideration. (He kept walking up and down, as if his time was very limited.) "You know there are so

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many accidents, the employees are very careless, very careless; if we compensated one we should have to compensate all—and then that would encourage carelessness, and so there would be no end to it.”

He spoke in English. Narayan could not follow all, but caught the general drift. Words failed him for reply—his feelings and his ignorance of the language left him speechless. Hobman saw the look of contempt in his face; and putting his hand in his pocket pulled out a few rupees, which he placed in a little pile on the table near Narayan.

“I should like, however, to give something myself—out of my own pocket, you know” (he knew very well that the Board would approve, and recoup him); “but of course you will understand this is not from the firm, and that it does not mean that the firm acknowledges any responsibility in the matter.”

Narayan would have liked to throw the coins in the man’s face. He rose and pushed them with the back of his hand over the table edge; and went out into the street.

Still, he thought he would go and see the English Director who lived on the Malabar Hill, or see if he was at home at any rate. He went, and found him; but it was all just the same—there was no difference.

Narayan walked through the streets. He felt a burning hatred of the English, which extended too to some degree to the Parsees.

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He saw the immense buildings—the signs of power and wealth on every hand—the outlines which he and his friend had discerned a few months back across the water; and now he saw what all these riches were piled on. And Ganesh, sagacious as his name, had had a true instinct about it all from the first. And he, Narayan, had persuaded, almost forced him to his own destruction.

His heart bled for his friend. All that evening he walked, and on into the night, far out of the city—walking, standing, resting and walking again—under the palm-fronds, under the stars, by the side of the sea—thinking, thinking. Sometimes his friend seemed to come close up to him, whispering in the sound of the waves, or touching him in the soft air which floated like a live thing on the bosom of the water; sometimes Ganesh seemed to be whirled away beyond all sight and sound, undiscoverable in any place in the whole universe; sometimes that awful scene in the mill haunted him, in all its details, over and over again, like a horrible nightmare; sometimes he could see nothing but the eyes of his friend as from his dying couch they gazed so wistfully, so meaningly, into his own. One after another the thoughts, the feelings, pursued each other through that long night. How strange, how inexplicable, how bitter, it all was! Sometimes he bowed his head to the ground and simply wept, in an agony of tears.

Tired out at last he returned to the great

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city as dawn broke in the sky. One thing at least was clear to him—that he must go back to the village and tell the folk there. The future was not clear to him, but it would settle itself.

So he went back.

It was a kind of penance—to go back and face the relatives, the parents, to tell the grievous tale. All the blame rested on him. He took it on himself; and all the superstition, the prejudice, the worldly wisdom of the little community was ready to heap it upon him. It was a terrible time; but even so there was a certain satisfaction to him in enduring it. If only the grief and the pain of it could recall the past!

But at last even this trouble subsided—the village settled down into its usual routine. Narayan was left to himself; and his thoughts turned to his own future, and what he should do.

Alas! he was an alien. To Bombay and the haunts of the English he felt he could never return. To remain in his native village, to drop down again into the old life, with all its monotony, its narrow pursuits and interests, its primitive creeds and beliefs, he now saw was equally impossible. What should he do? He was a thing without a place, without a name, astray and of no use in the world.

And then he thought of the old man in his hill-shrine, and of what he had said—"When you are tired of the world, my children, come

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back to me"—and his heart turned that way. What if by any chance there should be a new life there, in that old wisdom of which he with the wonderful eyes had spoken?

If only they could have gone together!—but now that was impossible; and what use was there in anything for oneself alone?

He abandoned the thought. And then again he remembered the look in the old man's face, and again he changed his mind.

Perhaps he would feel more at home there than anywhere else. At any rate he would go and see.

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I

THERE are some natures so keen, so intense, that they seem as if they were never made for this patchwork world of broken resolves, lukewarm alliances, half-avowed principles and half-disavowed creeds. They never can accommodate themselves to it; they are at war with it all the time. They neither quite understand others, nor are quite understood. They suffer, and at times they inflict suffering. Tragic almost always is their fate. The hungry sea beating for ever unsatisfied against a sullen shore is as near to its goal as they; the lightning-flash at mid-noon casts on our ordinary work-a-day world no stranger illumination.

Francesca was the daughter of an artist—a painter of portraits—a man pretty well known in his day; though I will not mention his name. But she had evil memories of her father, and it is probable that she never in her heart quite forgave him.

He must have been a pretty bad lot. He had induced the girl he married to run away with him, without the consent of her parents. That might have passed; but then, on the top of it, he had treated her badly—cruelly—and

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she, heart-broken, had died leaving behind two children. He drank; the children were less than cared for. Francesca (Frances was her baptismal name, but she always preferred the Italian form) was proud as Satan, keen and swift in mind, even when only a little dot. One day she and her younger brother joined hands, left the house and ran far away over hill and dale—if so be they might never return to the hated doors. Of course they were brought back; but after a time two maiden aunts took pity on her, and carried her off to live with them. And so a new phase of her life began.

The aunts lived most of their time in Italy. They were broad-minded, sensible women, artists too in their way, and with something cosmopolitan in their habits. The girl was happy with them, free as air, growing up in that sunny region, her tongue taking kindly to the caressing accents of the Tuscan speech, her mind by nature sensitive to every form of beauty. By the time she was eighteen (as I judge from a picture of that period), she was quite lovely: tall, with dark hair, pale olive complexion pulsing into life and colour, somewhat aquiline nose, grey eyes, and lips perhaps not without traces of suffering in their crimson sweetness: a beautiful, free, pagan creature; wayward and self-willed certainly, but of nature ardently truthful and direct.

Though full of the passion and romance of life, she detested falsehood—or what she

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considered falsehood—with an even greater passion. She had been brought up as a child under the usual “godly” influences, which, universal at that time, had apparently penetrated even into her father’s Bohemian household. It was not long before she felt an instinctive revolt against the cant and humbug of British piety. Then somehow she began to associate it all with her home-surroundings and the people amongst whom she felt so little at home; and so, from the moment she escaped into the greater world, she practically threw over the Bible and Christianity—and refused either to read the one or conform to the other. It was an unusual thing for a girl to do; but it corresponded with her thorough-going temperament. Her aunts never troubled or interfered with her on the subject, and to the end of her days she remained strenuously consistent. Nothing would induce her to read a word of the sacred Book, or to speak even with toleration of parsons and clerics and pious people generally. For which noble candour we must indeed thank her—even though she may have lost at times some breadth of outlook by it.

Her mind indeed was of that class which turns away from the abstract and unknown, and delights in all that is personal, gracious, and beautiful in human life; in pictures, statues, poetry; and in the lovely forms, sounds, and colours of Nature and the general world. Italy was just her natural home. Along the wooded hills in

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the neighbourhood of Lucca (where her aunts lived) she loved to roam, breathing deep the sweet air—climbing with her friends the steep stone paths among the olive-yards and vineyards, or riding mule-back, or delaying to chat and laugh with the peasants—a picture of frank free youth and enjoyment.

It was a period of happiness, but one not destined to last very long. One day there came to the house a young English officer. He was a good-looking, devil-may-care sort of fellow—good-natured, sociable, a “man of the world” as they say, and a gay cavalier among the fair sex. But what should she know about that? She believed in him with the passionate ardour of her nature, and he experienced for her the passion of his nature. They married. She left her Italian home and her good old aunts and went to join him in his life; and ere long they found themselves stationed at Gibraltar, where the regiment was quartered.

II

When a bright girl of some education and culture, and no doubt full of sentiments and ideals, marries what may be called the average man of her own class, she is not unlikely, in the first few weeks or months, to go through a disillusionising process, of its kind one of the most trying of mortal experiences. Completely

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ignorant, as she probably is, of certain sides of life, having little notion what kind of thing a man is, or even what marriage is, but only a rather vague sentiment in the place of knowledge, she finds herself at close quarters with a mate who suffers perhaps from the opposite defect—who knows somewhat too much, and too prosaically, about the world. She comes with a shock against the rudest practicalities. And hardly less shocked is she to discover—as she thinks—an incurable brutality in the male mind. Her Sir Galahad turns into a commonplace boor with boorish sex-needs. Love itself seems to her to be simply dragged in the mire.

Francesca, with her “all-or-nothing” constituted mind, was as it were by nature doomed to the disillusionising flames. A perfect attachment had, from the first, been the goal and ideal of her life. But it *must* be perfect, absolute, absorbing the whole world in itself. She would give, she felt, her whole being, her all, to the man she loved; but he must give in return *his* whole self, his body and his soul. There must be no half-measures—no reserves for second or third comers. The passion to her was like one of those pear-shaped gouts of molten glass, congealed by falling into ice-cold water—solid, crystalline, flawless—yet if you once broke off the smallest tip of it, 'twould resolve into mere dust. And she had married a man of a class of mind quite the opposite of

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her own—a man so good-natured, as the world terms it, so easy-minded, open, even generous; so gay, like an insect fluttering round any candle, so cheerful, and so completely incapable of regarding life from her point of view: that when she realised it all she felt as if the world was tumbling about her ears. With quick vision she foresaw that *he* would never change; she saw herself mated, chained to him for life; and she felt like a mad wild creature shut within a cage.

She foresaw, I say, that he would never change. Yet it is possible that with a wife of another calibre he *might* have changed to some degree. A shrewd managing woman of the world, loving him well, but not too much, capable of finessing a little against the wandering of his affections, not above holding him by his physical nature, might (it is conceivable) have soon had him in tow and have transmuted the gay creature (if that were any advantage) into some kind of a domestic animal. But Francesca was not the woman for such methods. Seeing it was not going to be an ideal marriage, *why* (she may have thought) should she condescend to the base symbolism of union at all? If he was weak enough to waver, why should she make efforts to retain his affection? As for him, it is likely that this very intensity of her temperament aggravated his congenital tendency to frivolity. Love at her price was too laborious. Naturally, if you cannot scale the Jungfrau you

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have to content yourself with easier and more accessible peaks.

Anyhow it is certain that, as man and wife, there was little chance of their getting on. And so it came about that before two years had passed their relation had simply subsided into that armed truce of married life whose terms are a scarcely-concealed indifference—a relation doubtless a bore and a grievance to him, but to her a cause of intense suffering.

III

Gibraltar is full of charm and beauty. Leigh Hunt speaks, on his voyage to Italy, of the wonderful impression produced by Cape St. Vincent standing out there in the morning air like a living thing. Even more perhaps is this true of Gibraltar, with its countless associations, keeping age-long watch over the entrance to the Mediterranean—that sea of fairy fable and history which seems to have been the birthplace of all Western civilisation. Especially towards sunset is the great rock magnificent, as it stands out bold, with its embrasures and bastions lit by the westering rays, over the little town below, and the bay astir with shipping.

In those days, access to the upper rock was not, as now, denied to outsiders. The ascent was laborious, but you were rewarded by a

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wonderful outlook. Near the top, a passage went right through the mountain, called "The Devil's Telescope." You went along that passage, and in a few moments had left the sunlight and the busy scene, and were standing on the other slope, looking eastward away over the Mediterranean. On the right were the faint outlines of the African coast, on the left the Spanish hills and the line of the seashore; in front and below you lay the great rock-shadow sleeping dark on the blue waters—while ships glided past it into dim distance or near distinctness. All was hushed and solemn, far removed above the world.

To this spot one day the young wife came—by chance alone over the upper ranges of the rock wandering. Her face had grown a little pale, the lips compressed, the expression somehow different from what it had been; but it brightened as the fair scene, now in morning light, unrolled before her. She stood for a while, gazing, then descended some rude steps—"breakneck stairs" they were called—to a grassy ledge, and turning to the right followed the ledge in a tentative way as if looking for a resting-place. Presently she came to an old tree, and finding a seat on its gnarled and twisted roots remained there a long time in reverie.

And thither, to the same old tree, on many a later occasion she came, and sat sometimes for hours, wrapt from the world and undiscovered.

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The regiment generally was well-pleased to be stationed at "Gib"—a pleasant enough place at that time for any one who loved society. And to Francesca herself there had been an undeniable charm at first in the life—the regimental balls and dinner-parties, the excursions over the water, or inland across the Spanish frontier, the calls of the outward and home-bound vessels, and so forth. But this mood had passed. The cares of motherhood had come upon her; and these, instead of relieving, had deepened her sense of loneliness. Her heart, so hungering for a mate, had closed with all its force (so it seemed to her) upon a nothing—like a hand upon a shadow—and now in sombre pain was grinding itself away, insatiate. The one place of any solace was this spot on the rock, where the rugged tree overhung the steep, and the myrtles and wild olives shimmered their leaves against the waters creeping far below. It was so beautiful there. And yet, as she often afterwards said, when the pain of loneliness is on the heart, Nature's beauty is but little solace; it seems too remote, too perfect, to be in sympathy with human suffering. Perhaps her torment would have been even greater than it was had she not luckily felt at times the incongruity and absurdity of her matrimonial compact even to the verge of laughter.

She had her domestic quarters—she and the infant boy and nurse—in a little villa on one of those tree-planted roads near the Alameda

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Gardens. One evening when she retired to rest—her husband being still with her, though “on duty” at the barracks that night—she bade him good-night, and going to her chamber, presently blew out the candles and sat by the open window for a while. The air was so sweet; and there was a pleasant breeze. After a time a door opened below, and he, Kit (as every one called him), stepped quietly out. He walked down the road a little way, actually not far enough to be unobserved; then stopped and looked round, and stood a little. Almost immediately a figure, dimly outlined, with flying streamers and dainty tripping gait, swept out from a shadow and joined him; and together the two passed out of sight.

It was not exactly more than Francesca already guessed; but the undeniability of the affair, the utter apparent indifference of discovery on his part, and above all the touch of vulgarity, stupefied her. It was the culmination of a long series of doubts, suspicions, desperations, converging up to certainty. She said nothing about it next day. The situation was declaring itself too strongly within for her to give it utterance. Besides, she really did not know for the time being what was going to happen, though she knew that *something* was. Her mind simply drifted on, working all the time, almost unbeknown, up to its own definite conclusions.

That evening there was a big dinner-party at the barracks. The mess-room and officers’

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quarters were gay with inlooped flags, lights, dresses, uniforms and the rest. She was there, with her husband—but to her it was like a scene apart, a mere show, not touching her. Yet she felt flushed and excited, and even (so she thought to herself) curiously well; her conversation was animated, even brilliant, and she fenced with the old adjutant-general who sat beside her in a way that excited his heartfelt devotion. Kit, who was making the best of his opportunities with the girl he had taken in to dinner, looked across the table in real admiration of his wife. "She's a grand creature," he thought—"if she only *would* be decently reasonable." Afterwards when the men were left alone, and some one complimented him on the subject, he took his marital honours more seriously than usual, and really felt he was rather "a lucky dog."

Next morning, however, there were explanations. Francesca came straight to the point of interrogation; and Kit did not disguise the complexity of his behaviour. At last she said :

"I've made up my mind, Kit—and I'm going to leave you."

Kit put up his eyeglass in genuine surprise.

"You're too damned serious, Chesca; why, we get on well enough—considering"—he paused a moment—"why, if all wives were like you, what would become of family life?"

'I don't care what other women put up

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with—I know my own mind. Your ways and my ways are different, Kit.”

“Yes, but you always want everybody to go *your* way—and that’s the chief difference between us, I believe.”

“Well, I don’t this time, Kit. I intend to go back to England and take the child with me; but I don’t want you to come. If you like to arrange anything for the child’s benefit, you can; if not, I daresay I can manage with what I have, and what I may be able to make.”

Kit was not disconcerted. On the contrary he was serene and good-tempered as usual. He put no obstacle in the way—possibly he was not altogether averse to the arrangement—he was even generous in the disposal of the available funds. Before long Francesca had carried out her plan, and had transferred her little *ménage* to England and into lodgings at St. Leonards.

IV

She was not perhaps the kind of woman in whom the mother-feeling is specially strong. Her nature was too intense, too passionate, for that. Her blood did not exactly run to milk. But, deprived of their natural outlet, their hunger unappeased, her feelings now turned on the child and closed round it. For two or three years she lived for it, worked, thought, and dreamed for it—and then it died.

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Poor Francesca ! all that directness, that keenness of feeling, that heart hungering so after something lovable and beautiful—that almost fierce concentration of her likes and dislikes—and the tragedy, perhaps inevitable, of it all !

But the measure of her troubles was not yet full. A woman separated from her husband, unable to marry again, bereft of her child, has seemingly most of the gates of life barred against her. At best her destiny is likely to be hard. To the question what she should do, it was not easy to find an answer.

As it was, Chance (so we call it) prompted her along a line which might have been thought the least likely and the least attractive for her class of mind—the line of philanthropy. It was the time of the Lancashire cotton famine. The sympathies of the English well-to-do classes, enlisted (since the heart of the shopkeeper is very near his pocket) on the side of the Southern States in the American Civil War, were overflowing in subscriptions for the starving mill-hands of Lancashire thrown out of work by the war. Money and help streamed northward.

With the stream the childless mother drifted ; she went to find other children to care for. She located herself in a Lancashire town, became a channel for subscriptions, and for a year or two lived continuously among the starving people—amid scenes of squalid want and misery, hideous chimneys and mills, blackened

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walls and fields, and sordid homes unenlightened by any ray except the heroism of those who suffered within them.

It was a great strain. One day she went into a cottage where there was fever; and a day or two after she was down with it herself. She was laid up for many months. When she recovered, her hearing was nearly gone, her eyesight was impaired, her back was bent. "It was like going through a tunnel," she said; "I went in young, good-looking, with all my faculties about me; I came out an old woman, wrinkled, blind and deaf."

She returned southwards, and moved about for a time, staying in apartments or with friends in various places. Finally she selected a locality in the suburbs of London, furnished a little home and settled down for the rest of her days.

And that was practically the end of her life.

V

It is strange to feel that life is thus finished and done with when, as far as the years are concerned, it may be little more than half-way through; but there are cases in which this occurs. The soul knows that no great new experience will now be added—there only remains to cross the *i's* and dot the *i's* of what

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has already been written. And sometimes one asks: What is the good of that when the sentence itself is only half complete?

To Francesca it was like that. Nor was there, for her, any prospect that the missing syllables of destiny would be made good in another stage of existence. The mysticism which goes with almost all religion was alien to the temper of her clear-cut mind. She did not believe in future states, and all the rest of it. And her intensely, almost savagely, truthful habit would not allow her to play hide-and-seek with herself over the possibilities of a life beyond the grave.

With a crippled body and this unbending temperament, it may easily be imagined that life was no bed of roses. "What slaves we are," she writes (in a diary of this period), "to our bodies! I awoke this morning with a stifling feeling of despair—the past was all pain, the future hopeless, and the present unendurable. What good, what good? It seemed to me, as to poor Pharamond, that the past was all a lie. Thank Heaven, it is not so to-night. Is not this Moon and Star a marvel of beauty? I have been looking at it this last hour as at a scene in a play; and now I have only to turn my head to see it." And in another place: "I was awake a long long time in the night, got up, and looked at the all-glorious stars, and wondered if hearts were aching there as here. To me it seems our affections are given us for torture. Lucky those who suffer together, however great

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that suffering may be. I have never been able to pity my namesake Francesca da Rimini."

Nevertheless there were consolations. It is seldom perhaps that strong feeling spends itself in a human heart without calling forth somewhere and from some side a return of devotion. Where the wine of life has been poured out—though it seem but on the desert sand—often a beautiful and unexpected flower will spring.

The girl, Nettie—a girl of some education and intelligence who had been engaged as companion to Francesca, and to help in the household—came at last to be something more than a companion. Francesca lavished on her the wealth of personal affection which had been so long pent up or denied of expression; and Nettie in her turn developed a real devotion to this elder woman, who in the ruin of her life seemed to her like the torso of some sculptured goddess, still aglow with the romance and fire of a past age. She waited upon her with a loyalty and fidelity, combined with practicality—a sort of Martha service—which if it did not appease the great needs, could not fail to touch Francesca's heart and make her feel that even in his less romantic paths love was beautiful. The wreck, as she was physically of her former self, unable to read except with the aid of a magnifying glass, unable through deafness to catch or join in the general conversation, Nettie's faithful and soothing companionship was to her a real rescue from death.

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What she would have done without it, it is hard to say; for it is certain that to the end her heart kept gnawing and fretting at itself. "My restless brain keeps grinding on at the problems of rest and motion," wrote Galileo—when old and blind and a prisoner of the Inquisition in his own little villa above Florence. And in Chesca's diary (apparently after reading this) occur the words: "My restless heart keeps grinding on at the problem of love—and finds no solution. As years go on the channels deepen. Young people think that elder ones do not feel as much as they; but it is only that the streams are not so near the surface. More hidden they may be, but just as swift as ever."

Thus, writing up little passages in her diary or spelling out with her glass Mrs. Browning's Sonnets from the Portuguese; tending a few favoured plants in the garden, or watching for an occasional friend's visit, she would eke out the slow hours of a crippled life.

But the irony of fate provided another curious and unexpected consolation of mediocrity in her life—and that was the new relation between her and Kit. When she fell ill in Lancashire his regiment had already returned to England. Kit had come to the rescue, seen that everything was provided for her, watched over her convalescence, paid her an occasional visit; and then, when she was well enough to travel, had become her courier and companion for the

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journey. But while thus offering his services, on this and other occasions, never for an instant did he pretend to anything like contrition or regret, or go in for scenes or explanations. He laid himself out to meet her—and she appreciated it—in the most humdrum friendly way; and from that time forward the germ of a new relation was established between them—just a sort of brother-sisterly feeling, not without a subdued but becoming sense of the comic on both sides.

Though his interest in life took a very special direction, Kit was no fool. He was a great reader on certain lines—had a whole library of books on the mistresses of Charles II., and had written a monograph on Louise de Querouaille, besides a little treatise (not published) on the intimacy of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. There were a few (not many) subjects of conversation which he had in common with his wife.

As time went on, and after she had settled down in her cottage-villa, this humdrum friendliness became quite accepted on both sides. Kit would call every now and then, when “business” or need of any kind required it, staying for a few days or just “looking in to see that all was right”—ever obliging, ever courteous and agreeable, and ever the gayest of gay dogs. When he was gone, Chesca would lift her hand and her eyebrows with an Italian gesture, and say, “Ahimè, isn’t he wonderful?”

So the years rolled on. Nettie married; but

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her attachment to her old friend remained unbroken and uninterfered with, for she lived close by, and to the end the two saw each other nearly every day. As to Kit and Francesca, it at last seemed convenient that they should once more live together. And so they did! He came and occupied part of the house; she occupied the rest.

Then came her last and fatal illness. But that was tragic. With her intense sense of personal charm and flawlessness, she for a long time concealed, even from her nearest friends, the trouble from which she was suffering. At last, however, it could be hid no longer, nor could the issue of its ravages be doubted. Then she made an heroic and characteristic resolve. She determined that she would die of sheer weakness and starvation before she would fall a prey to the unclean thing. She dwindled her daily food almost to nothing; she allowed herself but little sleep; she went about the house with preternatural activity, fiercely glad to wear herself out with exhaustion. She became pale and shadow-like. Nettie was with her constantly; Kit waited on her. Yet never would she allude to her illness or allow them to do so.

At last she had to take to her bed. Nettie came and stayed in the house; but still had difficulty in penetrating into the sick room. Half the time Francesca would lock the door and attend to her own wants. She positively forbade her friend staying by her bedside at

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night—was inexorable about it. The latter was miserable, and spent the hours sitting up and listening outside her chamber. The last night of all she sat there in the cold, watching through the just open door; but the dying woman would not have her in the room.

At last a change seemed to come. The sufferer was very still, except for her laboured breathing. Nettie glided in—it was moonlight—and to the bedside; her old friend—sixty years old now—lay so white, so thin, her eyes closed. Was she sleeping? The younger one spoke; touched her; and then a white hand slowly pushed itself from the coverlet. Nettie stopped, took the hand in hers, and kissed it. The eyes did not open; but a tear slipped through and onto the cheek.

And then Francesca was dead.

The unfinished sentence was never completed. The living tear lay on the dead face. The heart so full of suffering, so full of unfulfilled desire, caught so hopeless in the toils of destiny, yet so indomitable, went down as so many millions have done, into silence and the unknown; and the question, which was its life, remained unanswered.

Kit grieved, and quite sincerely. The years during which he had fulfilled so many friendly offices for his wife, as a brother might for an invalid sister, had endeared her to him. He was really nearer to her at the last than he had ever been before; and thinking of, or partly

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realising, all she had gone through, he was sincerely touched.

He felt it all as deeply as he well could. Then when a decent interval had elapsed, he married an old ally, and lived on in the house which he and Francesca had occupied.

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I

AMONG the Derbyshire dales, in the neighbourhood of Buxton, there still linger some very primitive households; and one of these, which I was acquainted with some years ago, it would be hard to find the like of again. It always seemed to me that it was a survival, with its quaint customs and habits, of very ancient, almost Saxon, days. Nowadays the rapid civilisation of the country districts—telephones, parcel posts, electricity, light railways, bicycles, motor-cars, &c.—is transforming the whole face of England; and in a few years the veritable Hodge and the old agricultural life, for good and for evil, will have ceased to exist.

The occasion of my first acquaintance with the family of the Logans was on my coming to stay for some time in the neighbourhood, when I called one day on some errand or other at the picturesque tumble-down old farmhouse, buried among its barns and buildings, into which you dropped down a step or two, as into some old British dug-out. There was a low rambling interior or house-place, whose great ceiling-beam

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a tall man might have touched with his head, a large fire-place, the usual Dutch clock, and some scanty furniture of settle, chairs and table—the whole scene rather dingy, and close and fusty of atmosphere.

A big woman of over fifty greeted me—a muscular determined-looking customer, with short dress, large feet, and brawny half-bare arms; and I was just thinking that she was the kind of person who would make short work with a burglar, when our salutations were suddenly interrupted by the most awful screeches and howls. My dog, a young spaniel, had followed me, all innocence, into the house; and three cats who dwelt there in maidenly seclusion, resenting the inroad, had raised Cain, “as with one complex yell they broke, all claws, upon the foe.”

Rover, whose only feline acquaintance hitherto had been a seraphic white kitten whom he adored, was scared out of his wits. He fled, yelping and howling, in a circle round the great kitchen; while the three demons fairly hunted him—spitting fire, springing on him from sides and rear and scratching him with cordial severity. Miss Logan, seizing the rolling-pin and shouting, rushed after them; while I, intent on collaring the dog, did the same. Thus in a moment we found ourselves flying round in a kind of whirlpool—Rover screaming, Miss Logan scolding, the cats receiving fearful knocks, I making ineffectual grabs and lunges—till at last, all out

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of breath, we got hold of the dog and hustled him out of the front door.

When order was restored, Miss Logan and I resumed our conversation, but were soon interrupted by the arrival of the mother (woken probably by the uproar out of her after-dinner nap), an old woman, well over seventy, rather small but solid, and broad in the beam and of a somewhat Dutch type of face. She settled herself down in a big arm-chair by the fire, took a long clay pipe out of a niche, and while her daughter gave a graphic account of the scrimmage, proceeded to fill and light it, puffing away with great satisfaction.

After that I used often to come in (without the dog), especially of an evening.

By the light of a tallow dip, stuck in an old brass candlestick, the scene was an old-fashioned one. Besides the old lady, who was generally there in the chimney corner, there were four sons—three of them great strapping fellows—stretched about on the settles after the day's work, asleep or smoking, or clumping across the floor in their great boots. Leather hides (for the youngest, Jim, did a little business as a tanner) hung down from cramps in the ceiling; a pot-hook in the chimney suspended a cauldron over the fire; and out of the big oven Miss Logan would take one of her gigantic meat-pies made in a washing panshon, with crust three inches thick, nothing short of which would satisfy the appetites of her brothers.

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There was a Herculean, or rather Vulcan-like air about the household, the effect of which became overpowering when in the semi-darkness across the floor, with straddling uncertain gait and uttering incoherent and sometimes wicked words—came a huge muscular gross-looking fellow of thirty-three or so, with close-cropped hair and beard a week old; cross-eyed, bow-legged, and obviously an idiot. This was Tommy, the cousin who lived with them—an alarming apparition to a stranger, but a real favourite in the family.

"How-de-do, Aunt Sarah," he said, with a kind of ironical-sounding upward turn of the voice; "fine mornin', fine mornin'."

"It isn't morning, Tommy," said Miss Logan; "can't thou see t'candle's lit?"

"Candle be damned!" was the terse reply. And while the "boys" laughed, Tommy's voice was heard rollicking to himself, half talking, half singing, with rapid and growing emphasis:

"Oh, she war a beauty, she war—a real slick-up fine-'un—no mistake about that—no mistake about that—

She came along the grass
And she came along the green

and you never saw such arms and neck and—oh my! . . ."

"Have DONE!" said the old lady, taking the pipe out of her mouth—and with a voice like a big drum.

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It was getting time she spoke; and she was mistress in that household, there was no doubt. There was a momentary silence and pause—and then Tommy's voice was heard as at first:

"How-de-do, Aunt Sarah; fine mornin'"—and the calmer atmosphere was restored.

"He gets so excited," said Miss Logan to me apologetically.

"Oh, he's a rum 'un," said Walter, rising out of his corner and standing with his back to the fire, a burly fellow with hair already turning a little grey, and an Irish twinkle in his lips and eyes—"he's a rum 'un is Mister Tommy."

"Mister be damned!" muttered Tommy.

"Now don't you excite him, Walter, do you *hear*?" interposed Mrs. Logan.

"Nay, nay, mother, I was only going to tell the gentleman about some of Tommy's exploits."

"Gentleman be damned!" reiterated the idiot.

"Now that's not right, Tommy, to say that—it's not polite," expostulated Miss Logan, in her somewhat strident voice.

"Why don't you leave him alone?" broke in Oliver rather sharply; "he's right enough. Tommy's right enough if you'd all just leave him alone."

And so presently Walter, still standing, went on with a history of Tommy's exploits—the family chiming in, and the idiot amusing

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himself by occasionally exploding into oaths, or bursting out into ecstatic rhapsodies which had to be checked.

There was a saturnine look about Tommy; but the stories, sufficiently trivial, did not corroborate this more than to a trivial degree. All the same one could not help feeling that his great strength might easily have made him dangerous at times. On one occasion (it appeared), when a hen had hatched a mixed brood of half-a-dozen ducklings and half-a-dozen chicks, he was quite put out because, while the ducklings went into the pond and swam, the chicks would not do so. An uproar was heard in the yard, and on going out, Tommy was found there driving the chicks towards the water, and trying to make "the damned things" swim.

By dint of some persuasion and judicious authority he was induced to leave them alone; but a day or two later, as he sat in the kitchen, his cousins heard him murmuring to himself, "They'll do it now—they'll do it now." Suspecting something wrong, one of them went into the yard—and there certainly the chicks were "swimming" on the pond, but all six dead. He had wrung their necks, and *thrown* them in!

On another occasion when a boy (and this was a story they were never tired of relating) he had taken the donkey with him into the little outhouse, had managed somehow to shut

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the door, and then when he wanted to come out had found it impossible to open it again. The family was attracted by stentorian shouts—"I've got him in, Aunt Sarah—I've got him in," and repairing to the scene of action, soon discovered the truth of the remark. But to *get him out* by any ordinary means was more than their united efforts could compass; there was not room for the door to open, and at last they had actually to break down the side wall of the little cabin, stone by stone, in order to release the prisoners!

As is the case with almost all idiots (and animals) the subtle instinct of association of ideas, unalloyed or untroubled by any thinking faculty, gave rise at times to what looked like a quite prophetic knowledge or insight.

When Tommy said "Rain"—even though the sky was clear the brothers paid attention. At one time mother and daughter were much troubled because whenever the Parson called Tommy would speak not a word, except every now and then at a lull in the conversation to jerk out the mystic dissyllable "Money . . . Money." The women, with their kind of old-fashioned respect for the holy man, were only vexed, and either could not or would not see the connection; but the brothers discovered some deep and hidden meaning in the remark, which they enjoyed hugely.

Perhaps there was a certain shrewd craftiness in the fellow. Despite his enormous

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strength they never could get him to do *any* kind of work—except fetching a pail or two of water from the brook. This he would not refuse to do. Probably long custom since boyish days had inured him to it. But on any other occasion, however hard-pressed the brothers might be, Tommy, if asked to lend a hand, would simply put his hands in his pockets, straddle his legs, and say: “Don’t like work—don’t like work!”

Anything more primitive than this whole household it would be hard to imagine. It seemed as if they had been dropped in a belated way—Rip-van-Winkle like—into the end of the nineteenth century. Miss Logan, when she went to market on Saturday, would buy a weekly paper—of which she read bits aloud on Sunday (not without difficulty) to the family; but books they had none—with the one exception of Zadkiel’s almanac, on which Charlotte set great store.

“Now doan’t yo’ laugh at Zadki-el,” she would say; “I doan’t see why he shudna be as true as anybody.”

“Well, he will be right sometimes, no doubt.”

“He’s a deal oftenser right than wrong. That’s what I think.”

“What does he say for to-day, Miss Logan?”

“Why I’ve joost been looking, and he says ‘goosty.’”

“Well now, do you call it gusty to-day? Why, it has been quite hot and calm all the time.”

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“Yes, I do—and I’ll tell yo’ why. It was the curiouesest thing. I went out this morning into the hay-field to speak to Oliver, and as yo’ say it was as hot as hot, and not a breath of air, and all on a sudden I sees Oliver’s eyes a lookin’ and lookin’, and he says, ‘Sithee, Charlotte, sithee’—and I looks, and there—well, you never saw—there was t’mown grass i’ t’corner by the hedge, a going round and round, like a dog running after its tail; it war some kind of a eddy or whirlwind, what do you call it? And then grass begins going oop into the air, and oop and oop, and then more grass after it; and I says to Oliver, ‘Lord a’ mercy on us, but it’s not going to tak’ t’whole crop.’ But I do assure you it carried us off a barrer-load or more of good hay—off ever so high—as high, some of it, as you’d see a lark singing—and dropped it in Stanhope’s fields and all along t’road down towards bridge. And if Zadki-el warn’t right to call that ‘goosty’ I doan’t know what you would have!”

II

Charlotte really kept the Logan household going. She was a tremendous worker. What with her huge pies, her dairy-work, butter-making, poultry, house-work, washing and mending and cleaning, her labours were unending. The mother could not do much.

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Joseph, the eldest brother, was the only one who helped, and he was a slight, feeble, amiable creature, having quite the appearance of an old man—a great contrast to the other brothers.

The father had died some years before. All the children, oddly enough, had remained unmarried, partly perhaps owing to a naturally strong family feeling, partly because their primitive ways made it difficult for them to find mates. Walter had been in early days in the army, had been bought out, had learned joinering, and had lived thenceforth at home—under the supposition that he was doing jobbing work and contributing to the household; but being supremely lazy, this remained for the most part a supposition. His great talent was for drinking—and for easy sociability. From perpetually feeling for the under side of the jug his own under lip stuck out like that of a fish; and the ease with which the liquor ran down his throat was only equalled by the slickness with which a kind of episcopal humour ran off his tongue.

Oliver did the farming—or what little there was to do—for the land attached to the place was very limited. With Betty, the ancient mare, and an equally ancient cart, with an ancient suit of clothes which never changed, and which looked (like the leathern suits of our ancestors) as if they had come down a generation or two, and with a perennial stubby beard, he was a picture of squareness and

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solidity. As he walked by the cart he whistled, and 'most always the same tune; when he met any one 'twas mostly the same greeting. If hot weather, he would say, "Can y' keep warm enough to-day, John?"—if winter, he would ask, "Is't cowl'd enough for ye, nah?" When he drank—which he did very regularly—it was with the same unchanging cheerful demeanour; and in his case (unlike that of Walter) it was hard to tell whether he had had a pint or a gallon.

On Saturday afternoons he and his sister (since she could not get her work done earlier) would jog off six miles to market at a snail's pace in the rumbling old heavy cart drawn by Betty—leaving perhaps at five P.M. and not arriving on the scene before seven or eight. Then they would come in for the tail end of the market, and visit round one or two friends; Oliver would have his pint or his gallon, and they would jolt back again in the middle of the night, often not arriving before one A.M. How they stood the intense cold and tedium on winter nights is a mystery. It is only known for certain that they did.

Yet notwithstanding all—notwithstanding the lumbering, old-fashionedness and unkemptness of the whole household—there was a wonderful charm about it. It was curious that the Logans' big kitchen—despite its small windows and low ceiling—was quite, for social purposes, the centre of the hamlet. It was about the

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only house in the vicinity into which the farmers and neighbours would freely go, to sit for an hour's chat. On Sunday evenings there was generally quite a little levee there.

I shall never forget the extraordinary effect of contrast produced by the appearance of an Oxford Don on this scene! He had come to us one afternoon unexpectedly, when we were staying in the neighbourhood; and our accommodation being limited, we had found him a room at the Logans' farm. Latish in the evening—towards midnight—we took him around to his lodging. To see this little man—the pink of bookish culture—sitting rather nervously on the edge of his chair—the unwashed giants eyeing him curiously in the obscure light; the old woman with her long pipe in the chimney corner, and her daughter, undeniable of voice and of presence, bustling around—was indeed delightful.

She, Charlotte, was the first to tackle him—which she did in her usual loud, slow tones: "Well, I hope this neighbourhood will do yo' good. Yo' doan't look very strong."

It was not exactly an encouraging remark, but it was so obviously kindly meant that it had a good effect.

"Our accommodation's none so very grand," she continued, "but we'll mak' you as comfortable as we can, and I hope you'll sleep well."

"Sleep well?" said Walter in his slick way

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—(he had evidently been drinking)—“Sleep well? I should think he will. He’ll *have* to.” Then rising from his corner, the jolly monster stood (as he generally did) with his back to the fire, and continued with increasing emphasis: “I tell you what: if this gentleman *doesn’t* sleep, if he moves about in the night, if he stirs, aye, even a little finger . . .”

And then, catching the effect of his words on the “gentleman’s” face, Walter had just sufficient sense to modify his own conclusion—“We’ll look after him, we’ll look after him. *But*, if any one disturbs *him*, or touches *him*, aye, even a hair of his head—that man’s a dead man.”

It spoke volumes for both our academic and rustic friends that the two parties after this sat up till the small hours of the morning, and before they retired established quite a cordial *entente* with each other.

Jim, the youngest brother, was the most capable and progressive of the family, and one who under favourable conditions might have made his way into the modern world. He was a fine well-made fellow of thirty-five—could mow a field with a scythe or pleach a hedge against anybody, was a tanner by trade and understood the arts of leather-dressing and curing, could do cobbling and boot-making very passably, and was a past grand-master in woodcraft, peeling and dressing timber, and so forth.

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He was not by nature an idler, as his accomplishments showed. On the contrary, with any prospect before him he would probably have been a vigorous worker; but he was sadly handicapped by his surroundings. Having to be the chief bread-winner for the family, he was disheartened from an early date by his two able-bodied elder brothers, who instead of bearing their share seemed to lapse more and more into drink and antediluvian apathy. Then new and rapid processes of tanning by means of chemicals were superseding the old oak-bark method, mowing machines were taking the place of the scythe, farmwork was becoming less and less remunerative. Jim might possibly have advanced with the days and adapted himself to the new conditions; but he could not drag his whole family after him. There was certainly the chance that he might marry, and so breaking his connection with the old home make with an enterprising wife an effective start in the world—but somehow this never came to pass.

After the belated fashion of his family he did not set about courting with any very serious intent till he was nearing forty—and then it was too late. His manners, his speech, his clothes, his personal habits, had already by that time drifted down into a kind of slouch, partly the result of mere want of hope and prospect; and none of the girls would have him. Barbara, the daughter of a neighbouring cottager, was a nice-looking sensible country lass of twenty,

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who would have made him an excellent wife. She used to work in the town during the week, coming out only for Saturday evenings and Sundays, and had got some townish notions; but for all that she recognised the sterling sturdy quality of the man.

"If I only had money enough to set him up in business, get him a decent set of clothes, and make him look a little like other folk"—she would say to herself—"I would love to marry him." But she was too practical-minded not to see the plain difficulties in the way.

Jim looked forward to the week-ends with a pathetic wistfulness, and many and many a time, in the thought of her coming, dragged himself with great effort past the public-house. Sometimes he would beg a nosegay from some private garden. But in the woods a mile away there was a patch of lilies-of-the-valley which very few people knew of, and the secret of which he kept to himself—and when they were in flower he preferred to go there.

"I've browt you some lilies, Barbara" (he had known her since a child). "Can you do with them?"

"I *can*, Jim; I can always do with flowers."

"They're grand now, up i' t'wood—such a many together."

"Whereabouts is it they grow?" said she. "I wish you'd tell me."

"I'll *show* you where they grow, if you'll

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come along wi' me." (A similar conversation had taken place before.)

"Not to-day, Jim, I think."

"It's allus 'not to-day,' Barbara; I reckon you don't care to be seen with a fellow like me."

"That's not it, Jim."

"You're happen a bit afeared of me"—(she was silent)—"but you needn't be the least little bit afeared, Barbara. I'll be as good as gold."

"How far do you want me to come with you?"

"Eh, I want you to come ever so far."

"What do you mean?"

"I want you to come wi' me allus, Barbara."

"O Jim, it's no good you're talking like that—and you know it isn't."

And she wheeled rather pettishly, and drifted the conversation off to something else.

Then Barbara took to staying in town week-ends, and it was rumoured she was keeping company with a more civilised suitor. Jim after a time took up with another girl. She was of much the same age and type as Barbara, and the result was much the same—unfavourable to him. Then he began to drink more. There was no chance for a fellow like him. His brothers drank; and it was no good him working to keep them while they held the jug to their mouths. So he drank more, and worked less, and the household began to go down and down.

Then the mother died. Things had kept pretty straight up till then; but that was the

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turning-point; and when shortly afterwards Tommy had a succession of violent fits which proved fatal, the household seemed to have lost its centre. It became disorganised. The brothers grew more and more careless; poverty threatened; the landlord pressed for rent; and though Charlotte slaved harder than ever, she could barely keep the ship from sinking.

There was something tragic in the decay of this family, because however individual members might seem to blame, it was so evident that a main cause lay in the general change of social conditions. The Logans were a survival of a kind of old-world communism. As neighbours no one could be pleasanter to deal with. If help was needed they were always ready with a hand, or a serviceable tool, and a jolly word thrown in. If they were employed to do a piece of work for one, nothing could be farther from their thoughts, in making their charge for it, than the ordinary commercial double-dealing. In fact this was the trouble, that they always referred back to the most ancient traditional customs of payment for work, and so really seldom got a wage adequate to the labour they put in.

It can readily be imagined that a family of this kind planted down in the middle of a commercial society—powerless to take advantage of either the bad or the good in modern life, unable to adopt the ways of competition, and unable to accommodate itself to any “new-fangled” methods

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of production, handicapped in fact by its friendliness and handicapped by its primitive habits—was from the first doomed. It went down and down, till at last, much to the regret of the neighbours, it had to leave the old farm and migrate to another part of the country.

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"THAT boy of yours has got hip-disease, Mr. Jarvis, and you ought to have told me about it two years ago."

"Aye, aye, I believe I owt. I was for speaking about him to ye mony a time, mony a time, but I didn't do, I didn't do." And the old farmer scratched his head in an apologetic manner.

"That's what I allus told ye, William—as 'e ought to be 'tended to, and now very like 'e'll never walk again," said little Mrs. Jarvis, raising the corner of her apron as if on its way to her eye. She seemed also rather vague-minded, but a somewhat brisker person than her husband; and the little farm-parlour where they sat gave evidence of neat and orderly house-keeping.

The doctor, well known and rather respected in the neighbourhood on account of his brusque and decided manners, went on: "You wouldn't serve a young horse like that, Mr. Jarvis. But you know you farmers are all the same. You don't work a two-year-old in the plough or the heavy cart all day, and if you did it would be round the parish in a jiffy, as a regular scandal ;

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but you'll let a growing lad trail about the fields and behind the plough or the harrow from dawn to dark, and run himself out weedy when he ought to be making bone and flesh, and then you're surprised when he goes the wrong way and perhaps turns out a cripple for life."

"Aye, aye, it's right enough what you say," responded Mr. Jarvis; "leastwise I suppose it is. But I began work mysen when I was nine year old—there was no School Boards then—and I don't know that I'm any the worse for it."

To judge by Mr. Jarvis' rather knotty and worn-out appearance, there might have been two opinions about that last remark. But the doctor simply continued: "Well, the long and short of it is, he'll have to go to the hospital."

"They won't be for taking his leg off, will they?" said the lady, in a state of vague terror, and the apron-corner completed its journey to her eye.

"No, Mrs. Jarvis, don't be alarmed about that. They'll pull him up and set him in shape a bit—but all the same it's likely that one leg will always be shorter than the other."

So Pete went to the hospital, and in two months was out again, with strict injunctions as to good food and rest, and spending so many hours a day on his back. And as time went on he pulled together, as the doctor had said, and emerged again on the fields—a dark-eyed, black-haired, rather sensitive, shy youth of eighteen or nineteen, not very tall, but fairly strong and

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muscular—though always a little awkward in walking, and fitted only for the lighter jobs.

"Thee take Bonnie on the fallow, and knock the twitch about a bit till dinner-time," his elder brother would say, not unkindly. "Thee's not fit to work all day."

So Pete would do a boy's job, crossing and recrossing the field with the harrow all the morning, and then would be fain to spend the afternoon in the yard mending tools, or at some such work as would not tax his lower limbs. Or he would take the cart when there was no very heavy carting to do; or trim the fences with the hedging bill. But it was a bit depressing, this feeling that he was only half a man—that he was "a waster." People were laughing at him, perhaps—or pitying him, which was even worse. Certainly, he was pretty good at writing and figuring, and sometimes old Mr. Jarvis would refer to him for making out a bill for hay delivered in Turton (the nearest town), or his mother would get him to write labels for her jam jars; but they hardly concealed their opinion of the uselessness of the much time he spent in reading books and all sorts of "print."

"He got into them ways when he war laid up in bed, and happen he'll never get out of 'em again," said Mrs. Jarvis.

Thus things went on for two or three years; and it seemed not improbable to Pete that his whole life would never be much different—cramped down to a low level of ineffectualness

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and monotony, and unmanly dependence on others—when one day something happened.

He was going down Bockin Lane that morning, with the cart, walking beside Bonnie—a lovely morning in early June, with the scent of sycamore and hawthorn bloom suffusing the air, and the neatly trimmed box hedge that fences the Faircloughs' farm-garden from the public road all breaking into points of budding green—when there in the sun, at the little wicket gate, stood Sallie Fairclough. He knew Sallie of course, well enough. They had in fact been at school together—though she had been a year or so older than he. But it was years since he had seen her; and now—for a moment—he wondered if it was really her, he almost wondered whether he knew her well enough to speak to her.

But before he could gather up resolution she said quite simply and pleasantly, "Good-morning, Pete"—and Pete pulled up his cart without knowing why, and said "Good-mornin'"—and then felt awfully shy and could not think of anything in the world to talk about.

"How are you these days?" she continued—"we heard about you going to the hospital."

"Oh, that were three years ago," said Pete, stretching a point. "I'm all right *now*."

She certainly looked very very sweet, standing there in the sun—which just showed the slight freckle on her fair skin. Pete might well be excused his embarrassment. Her smile was so

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real bright and friendly, and her eyes, under rather broad and well-curved brows, twinkled with a kind of arch good-humour.

"And you have still got old Bonnie, I see," she said, coming up and patting the white mare's neck. "Do you remember when we had the Sunday-school treat to Eysham woods, and your father lent the cart and Bonnie took fright—she had never had a load of children before—and ran us up the bank side and nearly shot us all out into the road? and your father said we would all have to get out and walk if we didn't stop laughing?"

"Aye, I remember," said Pete—"but she wouldn't do that now."

"How old is she?"

"Well, she's getting on. She were fourteen last month; but she can do a good day's work yet—can't thou, lass?" added Pete, coming close, he also, and rubbing the side of Bonnie's nose with his hand.

They could see close into each other's faces. She noted his sensitive, almost pained look—not very usual in a farm-lad. And he—he looked in her eyes for a moment only, and then his gaze dropped to her feet. The conversation, however, kept on its own way among very obvious facts and quite commonplace remarks; and in a minute or two more they separated—each to their own work.

But Pete soon became aware that something queer had happened to him. No, he couldn't

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get her face out of his head, that arch look, the winning ripple of her voice, the glance of white teeth behind those lips. All day they haunted him, and as he walked beside Bonnie he went over that brief conversation half-a-dozen times in his mind. Once even he stroked the mare's neck just where Sallie had patted it. Then he knew that he was a fool, and turned his thoughts away to other things.

Of course they met again before long, and again. But always much the same. The conversation dragged a little, always on the barest rocks of fact; the girl seemed to him more reserved than that first time—perhaps she really was so. Always when with her he felt a something of distance, a cool clear space between which seemed to make familiarity impossible—and then always again when away, oh! how close she came, so magically close. Such a deep feeling of nearness and intimacy, always somehow connected with her voice. Not so much anything particular about her figure and features, as the simple tone and quality of her voice. It was that that haunted him.

Then at last he knew and realised what was the matter. "Pete," he said, "thou'rt a fool. Thou's got a game leg; thou's not a penny in the world, and no prospects to make a decent living, and thou's getting thyself gone in luv. And is it likely that she'd look at thee—even if thou *could* make an offer—let alone that she's got a chap courting her already?" (For indeed

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there was a rumour that Jack Warner of Sandygate was "soft on Sallie Fairclough.")

So he reasoned within himself. And as usual in such cases with very little effect. A restlessness fell on him; he could not take a proper interest in his work—kept changing his job—and then failing to do it properly. "What's the matter with thee, lad?" said his father, when for the third time Pete had forgotten to bring the spanner when they were out with the mowing machine—"what's thou dreaming about all along?" Burning nights too came, a kind of fever, upon him—realising how impossible the whole thing was, and yet unable to turn his thoughts, or to stem the tide which seemed to carry them always in one direction.

At last he made up his mind. He would break himself off altogether. He would give up seeing her. That was the only thing to do. Just not to see her any more. That was the sensiblest thing. Easy to say, of course—but it's a bit hard on a chap, when you've found your girl, and not even had a chance to kiss her. Well, if he met her again he would just let her understand it was good-bye, and that would be the end.

So he made up his mind, firm as a rock.

And he had not very long to wait. A few evenings later—he was on his way home from Turton, walking along the main road, when in the twilight he saw a figure before him carrying a basket on one arm. There was no doubt who

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it was. He hurried, always limping a little, and overtook her—his mind charged with feeling and a vague sense of many things he wanted to say.

"I thowt it was you, Sallie," he panted, as he came up.

"Oh, it's you, Pete," she replied—and the sound of her voice in the dusk made him feel nearer to her than he had felt for a long time; "have you just come from Turton?"

"Yes," he said; "have *you* been there?"

"Yes; I've just come from staying the week-end with my aunt—who has not been very well."

There was a pause. The insuperable difficulty of conversation arose before Pete.

"The roads are grand now for walking," he said.

"It's a blessing that the rain has given over," was the reply.

"That's the first time I've seen the moon this round," said Pete, as a silver horn appeared above a cloud.

"It can't be more than three or four days old," said Sallie.

Pete felt that the conversation was not getting on. "I don't suppose I shall see you again for a bit," he said, making a huge effort.

"No," answered the girl with provoking calmness; "if the weather holds now, you'll be busy in the corn."

That was not at all what Pete meant.

"Have you cut yours?" she continued.

"Yes," he replied; "we have led some, and the rest is done up in sheaves ready for leading,

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except the Kirk field, and we haven't cut that yet." And again the conversation lapsed into the barest recital of facts.

Pete felt farther off than ever. He had a hopeless, reckless sensation, and a nasty pain somewhere in his internal regions.

They came to the point where Bockin Lane turned off the road. He might have gone along with her—it would have been as near for him as the other way—but he didn't.

"I must go this way to-night," he said. "Good-bye"—and put out his hand.

"Good-night," she answered, and her hand was in his. He held it longer than is usual for a handshake. He meant to say something (he didn't quite know what) in the way of a farewell, but somehow the words never came out. He was looking at her face, so strangely beautiful in the soft light. It was lovelier and closer to him than ever. He could not leave her so, that was certain.

He drew her to him, still holding her hand, and putting his left arm round her neck bent and kissed her.

She could not defend herself, even if she had wished, for her other arm held the basket; and he felt her warm lips on his, and caught the fragrance of her cheek.

He quite expected a slap or something of the kind; but it did not come. For a moment he stood motionless, with her hand still in his; she was the first to speak.

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"Good-night," she said, in a cheerful ordinary tone; and withdrawing her hand passed on up the lane.

Pete did not recover speech for a few seconds. Then he called after her in a strong voice, "Good-night," and raced on, hardly knowing where he was going.

A tumult was in his heart for some days—an extraordinary sense of elation, a vision of a face seen in the moonlight, a deep feeling of something like worship, and perhaps more than all, poor boy, of gratitude, simply because he had not been rebuffed. But it was all in a whirl, without perspective. By degrees, however, it began to settle down and he could take stock of his position.

It was clear at any rate that she had not scouted him; and that was much. But whether she really cared for him—or only just good-naturedly tolerated his advance—was indeed another question. Anyhow his intentions of "not meeting again" were scattered to the winds, and he was already planning the next *rencontre*.

Sunday evening from time immemorial has been devoted to rustic love-making. There is a cessation of all duties. Folk put on their best clothes—even if they have not done so earlier in the day; and visits and a little sociability are all in order. Girls sometimes go off to Church by themselves; sometimes, if their parents are also going, they find they are not quite ready at the

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appointed time, and say they will *follow*; sometimes, as they follow, they are delayed by meeting somebody; sometimes they never reach Church at all.

On the Sunday evening after the events last recorded, Sallie set out to Church alone. Her father and mother had not gone before, however, for they rarely went to Church at all, being both of a sessile and corpulent habit. She had not gone far before she met Pete—of course quite by accident—and Pete turned and walked with her. The general road on such an evening is not a very good place for love-making; and Pete suggested that they should turn down a by-lane; but Sallie was all for going to Church. Pete then said something about meeting her afterwards; but she was coming home with the Taylors, she said—she almost always came home with them, because they lived in the same direction. And Pete saw anyhow that the difficulty of disengaging her from the others, after the service, would be considerable. So when they got near the village he went back, having first got leave to wait for her in the same way *next* Sunday. But altogether it was disappointing, and during the week Pete felt feverish and depressed.

When Sunday came, however, his spirits rose. His thoughts were full of hope. He milked early, changed his clothes, washed, and put in his coat-lapel a late-blooming rosebud (which he intended to take out and give her). Anyhow

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they were going to come to some understanding this time.

He waited outside the Faircloughs' wicket for an hour or more, walking up and down the road in a careless inadvertent way, as if with no reference to the gate. People passed on their way to Church—but no Sallie. Then the road became quiet again—but still no sign. What had happened? He slipped inside the little gate, and into the garden. There was a light in the window of the big kitchen. He went through to the door and rather timidly knocked. It opened, and there was Sallie.

"Come in," she cried; and Pete stepped in.

There was only old Mr. Fairclough in the room besides Sallie; but that was one too many; and he was sitting by the fire at the other end, sideways to the door. The moment he saw Pete he wheeled his chair round, so that his ample back was presented to the visitor, and gazed intently at the ruddy embers. The reception was disconcerting.

"Sit down," said Sallie; and Pete dropped onto the bench which ran along the door side of the kitchen table. There was a silence. The girl filled the gap with little busy sounds—as if still finishing some tidying up. She went to the cupboard and moved some tea-cups; then to a side-table and arranged the milk-jugs. Pete stuck. It was no good asking if she was going to Church now. It was much too late. At last in desperation he said—in a low voice—"Are ye comin' out?"

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"Now thee take off," said the old man, wheeling round again and facing the lad. He was a portly old man, somewhat fond of his glass, probably; but with a certain weighty presence, and the air of one who has a good balance at the bank. "Thee take off; we want none such as thee here."

"O father, how rude you are!" exclaimed Sallie. But the old man wheeled back again to the fire, and remained silent.

Pete did not move for a moment. Sallie shuffled the jugs and milk-cans more audibly than ever. Then turning to him with a smile, she said, "I can't very well come out this evening, Pete"—and as he rose to go—in a very low voice and just touching his hand—"Good-night."

"Good-night," responded Pete, and slipped out of the door.

"I won't have that Jarvis lad a coming here, trailing after thee," said Mr. Fairclough rather furiously, as soon as the door had closed.

"I don't know that he's coming after me particular," said Sallie heatedly—her bosom heaving.

"That's a lie," said the old man; "thou's been seen walking with him."

"Is that to say I'm carrying on with everybody I'm seen walking with?"

"And there's others after thee besides, from what I hear," continued the father.

"You do give me a character, for sure," retorted the girl.

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“Well, I won’t have *that* lad a-wiping his feet on our door-mat, so I tell thee, and there’s an end on it.”

The conversation lapsed; and Sallie resigned herself to reading a story from the weekly paper.

Pete went home, and fell into a state of great despondency. The scene had made him realise again how hopeless his position was. Even if she did care for him in that sense—(and he was by no means sure that she did—for he had the gumption to see that there was a difference between kindness and love)—even then, was it fair to gain her affections—for what? Indeed it was only too clear that for both their sakes he had better give the whole thing up. He certainly felt wretched at the thought of doing so; but there was no alternative.

So all that week he went about his work, trying hard to turn his thoughts away from the whole subject—though that queer pain coming again in his interior region made it very difficult to do so—trying to pan down again to ordinary humdrum life; and really thinking he had succeeded. Till Sunday evening came again; and then (how on earth did it happen?) he found himself once more walking along Bockin Lane on his way to the Faircloughs’ farm.

After all she might be expecting him, and might come out to look for him. And what would she think if he *wasn’t* there? Anyhow there would be no harm in going to see.

He looked in at the wicket gate. Yes, there

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was some one in the garden. He went in. No, it was not her. It was a man. Then in an instant, dark as the evening was growing, he saw who it was. It was his very rival, Jack Warner.

"What are *you* doing here?" he said. He had no intention of speaking in that tone, but the words leaped out of his mouth in an abrupt, almost insolent way, bearing with them a flood of suppressed irritation and depression. A visible enemy was almost a relief.

"What am *I* doing here?" was the slow and snorting reply. "What am *I* doing here? You damned young fool! if you don't scuttle, and quickly, I'll box your ears for you."

Pete made no articulate reply; but instantly went for Jack, and in the darkness struck out at him, landing him a nasty one on the side of his nose. Warner was taken aback, before he could parry the blow, but he was not long in returning it. And at once the fight became general.

Warner was rougher and heavier than Pete; but Pete was naturally the quicker of the two—though handicapped of course by his leg. They fought there in the darkness in rough and tumble fashion, not always clearly seeing what they were doing—striking, gripping, towsing at each other. Before long their caps were off and their clothes torn—till at last Warner, disengaging himself with a great effort, launched a heavy blow at Pete's forehead, which struck

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him between the eyes, and laid him on his back on the turf.

The whole thing went on in comparative silence. No one came out of the house; no one passed along the road. Jack Warner looked about for his cap, found it, and passed out of the gate onto the road. Pete after an interval pulled himself together, got up, and in a rather dazed condition staggered homeward.

That fight settled Pete's fate. Of course it was out all over the place next day. Not that Pete said a word—but it is easy to imagine the other one did; and Pete's condition—his bruises and so forth—was witness to the general truth of the story. To stay any longer in the neighbourhood was intolerable; and he made up his mind to do—what he should have done two or three years earlier, or what his parents should have made him do—go and try his luck in town.

In a way the whole thing was a relief. It rescued Pete from a false position; it gave him a clear line along which to go. The unbearable sense of his being a burden at home and a derision to neighbours made escape into another life a thing of promise, and lighted up hopes for the future. As to Sallie, the one thing certain was that he had fought for her, and been beaten; and all boyish honour and morality made it clear that he must surrender her to the victor—as also that any respect she may have had for him (Pete) would now

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probably be transferred to the other. All the same he felt a great satisfaction in the fight, and in having suffered for her sake. His heart was still sore, but the soreness of his body acted as a kind of counter-irritant and drew the pain outwards to a region where it could be more easily healed.

Mr. and Mrs. Jarvis were of no use. They shillied and shallied—not certainly dissuading their son from going, nor in any effective way assisting him. And the end of it was that Pete one morning, when the corn harvest was over, packed up a few things and went off to Turton “on his own,” as the neighbours said.

It was of course the saving of him. With a good head, and a fair knowledge of figures, and that sturdy reliability and exactness that country life gives, he was the kind of young fellow that is prized in some classes of town work. The slight disability of his leg was not of importance. Turton, though some fifteen miles from his home, was fairly well known to Pete, as being the larger market town to which they sometimes went. It was really a growing manufacturing centre. It was not long before he found there were places to be had which would at any rate serve him for a time; and finally he was taken on as a weighing-clerk and assistant by a hay-dealer. The concern was a large one, and from the rougher work he soon passed on to the buying and selling, for which his experience well qualified him;

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and really after a few months he was doing very well.

From occasional callers he got tidings of home, but he did not care to return there just yet. Of Sallie Fairclough he could hear but little. Apparently nothing particular had happened in that quarter. She was still a dream and a vision to him—just as she had stood there that first night in the moonlight; sometimes with his improving prospects she even became more than a dream—a hope of possible realisation dawned on him; but the changing scenes and interests of the town filled his life now and discounted all visions; and it was easy to suppose that other interests filled her life. It was best not to stir the waters again.

One day, however (things will happen so), just when he had fairly settled down to this attitude of mind with regard to her—one Saturday—a note was left at the office. It was addressed to him in a neat round hand, “Mr. Pete Jarvis, &c.,” and inside :

“DEAR PETE,—What a long time it is since you have been to see me. I heard of your coming to Turton. I am staying here now for two or three days with my aunt—17 Barton Street—will you come in this evening at seven o'clock and we can have a little talk again.—Yours always truly, S. FAIRCLOUGH.”

Pete trembled a bit. He really did not

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know he cared for her so much, as the sight of that half sheet of note-paper revealed to him. But as he held it in his hand, the dear face rose before him distinct, bringing with it a flood of devotion. He felt he would do anything in the world for her.

That evening saw him looking at the numbers on the gates of the brick and slate cottages which formed Barton Street. He went to the back door of No. 17, and knocked, not without some trepidation as to what sort of person the aunt might prove to be, and how she would receive him. The door opened, and there was Sallie, perhaps a little changed, he could not exactly tell in what respect; but the same winning, trust-inspiring smile, the same unclouded brows.

"Come in—I'm so glad to see you. Come through to the front room."

They went through to the little parlour—Pete looking round in the expectation of seeing a maiden lady in cap and spectacles.

"Sit down, Pete. Aunt is out for the evening; and I thought it would be so good to see you again."

Pete, somehow, was silent.

"Why haven't you been to see me all this long time, Pete? You didn't mind what my father said that Sunday evening, did you? But of course I know," she continued; "you have been so busy since you have been down here—you wouldn't have time to think about old friends."

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"I did come that next Sunday," said Pete, replying to the earlier part of her question.

"Oh yes, I know all about that," she said, with a merry laugh and a twinkle—"and I believe you gave Jack a pretty good thrashing—though of course he said the opposite. He was awfully bruised, you know."

This was balm to poor Pete's wounded soul, and he felt a sort of thrill, and a sense as if the world was beginning again—but couldn't speak.

"At least he looked bad enough a few days after when he came fooling round me again," she went on; "but I gave him what for; I did that; and sent him about his business, once and for all."

"Then you really didn't care about him?"

"I—care—about—him? O Pete," and there came a look of real distress into her face, as she leaned forward looking pleadingly in her visitor's eyes.

Something happened among Pete's muscles. They suddenly lifted him off his chair, and landed him on his knees on the floor in front of her. His arms went round her neck, and his lips met and rested on hers.

ELIZA ANNE

I

ELIZA ANNE used to work in an edge-tool factory—where they made scythes, hay-knives, sheep-shears, and so forth. She was in the warehouse—a long room with benches to work at, and walls full of shelves and pigeon-holes, and other girls like herself in aprons of sack-cloth—and her business was to grease and blue-varnish the finished blades, and to sort, wrap, and range them away. She was one of those good-natured, obliging types which every one knows; a thin, pale-faced, anæmic girl of twenty, with splay feet, snub nose, and most indomitably cheerful temperament; who always had a smile on, or a word of cheer, for the other girls; or would be ready to do any little job for them, however tired she might seem or really be; she had in fact almost a passion for this sort of self-sacrifice.

When her work was done she would hurry home to tidy up the house for her mother, and to get ready their dinners for the next day; for she had to take her own dinner with her in the morning to the shop, and her mother needed

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to have hers prepared for her beforehand. The two lived together in a back street in a dismal outskirt of the big town. There were bits of waste ground about, and a great refuse heap or "spoil bank" from a neighbouring colliery, and their front door looked straight out on a brick wall. And within, the jerry-built brick den was dismal too, with its floor already fallen a couple of inches away from the wall, and its bits of tumble-down furniture; but Eliza Anne, brisking about, cast a gleam of cheerfulness on it for the old mother. Then, later in the evening, if there was an hour to spare, the girl would go round to the Chapel—for this was the great joy of her life—shrilling hymns there, or listening to the preacher, or after service in the dusk outside kissing the other girls (and sometimes the young men) Good-night: a naive and pagan blend of emotions!

The old mother, now a widow, was very queer, and might well have tried a less devoted daughter. She had been "away" at one time—as they termed it; that is, in an asylum; and now, restless and futile through the house, upstairs into the attic or down into the cellar, or sometimes standing tiptoe on an arm of the old sofa (to reach the top shelf of the cupboard), like some strange distraught animal she roamed—hardly even with all this effort keeping the dwelling in decent order. Eliza Anne would come in—with that tripping, prancing, coster-girl walk of hers, which matched so oddly

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with her deadly thin, pale face—and would scold in a good-humoured way :

“Now, mother, what are you a doin’, up on that sofy arm again? You’ll be the death of yoursen some day—and at your age too. Come down, I say.”

“Nay, leave me alone—I’m right enew,” mumbled the old lady in a heedless way, more as if talking to herself.

“And you’ve never even put t’kettle on—oh dear, oh dear—and I’m wanting a cup o’ tea that bad; what have you been doin’ wi’ yoursen all t’afternoon?”

“Nay” (climbing down and mumbling to herself), “I didn’t know it was so late.”

“And Mr. Henry—that’s our governor’s son, you know—he’s been a-blowin’ round the warehouse this afternoon and a-ratin’ the girls something scandalous, over their work; but he never says nowt to me, you know, ’cos I cook him his chop at dinner-time—and he allus says I do it to a turn—and I fetch him his pint o’ stout—and he keeps friends wi’ me. But there’s going to be a Mission service at t’Chapel this evening, and Mr. Jackson—he’s a beautiful preacher—he’s going to preach on ‘Saving the Heathen,’ and I want to go as soon as I’ve straightened up a bit.” And Eliza Anne throwing off her jacket and hat set to to “tidy up” and get the tea ready.

“Nay, thou’rt allus wanting to go to t’Chapel, child, an’ I doan’t see that it does thee no good—

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an' only gieing thy money away, what we want bad enough at home."

"He that lendeth to the Lord, look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again," replied the girl, with a cheerful irresponsible smile on her white face.

The old woman sighed, in a rather meaningless, habitual way, and presently the two sat down to their thin meal of white bread, dripping, and tea.

II

Warehouse girls do not get very grand wages. The work, as a rule, demands very little in the way of skill or experience. There are plenty of candidates for any vacancy; girls living at home, as most do, with a father or brothers for bread-winners, are pleased if they can just get pocket-money; and the lowest that a wage-earner will accept is of course the highest that commercial morality considers itself bound to give. Consequently it follows that the labour of such girls is obtained at a very cheap rate.

As to Eliza Anne, her wage, which had commenced at seven shillings a week, had now risen to ten. Of course it was not really sufficient to keep the household going; but it never seemed to occur to her that she was underpaid for what she did. Like thousands, and hundreds of thousands of others in the same situation, she accepted the social arrangements

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under which she lived, as we accept storms and droughts and eclipses—as part of the order of Nature, whose inevitableness it does not even occur to us to question.

To make ends meet—and partly out of religion—she had for some time taken to stinting herself. She did not eat nearly enough. And the less she ate the more religious she grew; and the more religious she grew, the more she thought it her duty to starve herself. So time went on, till at last the seeds of phthisis were sown. There was a hacking cough, and the pale face became paler and thinner, the snub nose more ethereal.

And as the body grew weaker the brain got more and more excited. She sang hymns to distraction. The work-girls, and even the mother at home, scolded; Mr. Henry complained that her caterwauling turned the stout sour. Rows ensued, and these led to further excitement.

At last her poor brain gave way.

Having heard the Bible read so frequently she concluded that she too was possessed of a devil.

“Where is your soul, mother?” she said one day.

“My soul, child, what are you talking about?”

“Well, I s’pose you’ve got one, haven’t you?” said the girl, with an odd gleam in her eye.

“I’m sure I don’t know—s’posing I have?”

“Well, it’s in your head, isn’t it?”

“Nay, how can I tell, child”—and the old

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lady tapped her skull with her finger in a lost, aimless kind of way.

"Well, mine isn't. It's down here" (putting her hand over the lower part of her body), "and the Devil has got on top of it, and is pushing, pushing it down into Hell."

"Doan't thou talk such nonsense, Eliza Anne; it's not fit for a body to hear."

"And God will not save it. No—He will never look at me again. For He telled me not to eat so much, and I was tempted and did eat——"

"Be quiet, I tell thee——"

"And He has turned His face from me, and will never look at me again."

Then the mania became acute. She had to leave her work. It was not safe for her to be at home; and she, too, "went away"—to the asylum.

III

Such tiny items of Humanity—mother and daughter—what interest, it may be asked, can there be in the bare recital of their narrow lives? Yet these, too, are a part of the great chain which stretches endlessly from the past to the future; and evolution, which by the method of unceasing experiment occasionally produces a great success, a genius, a pioneer, a new development, by exactly the same method is continually turning out its countless commonplaces and failures.

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Why consider the one so much more than the other—since they are all part of the same process, and indicate at bottom the same forces, tendencies, characteristics? and since the most ill-grown and unshaped product of society is after all only ourselves in another form—a form inevitable under the given conditions—and full of light and meaning if we so understand it?

The mother—though doubtless feeling her daughter's illness—showed little or no sign; but went on as before, very much like some brainless animal, munching her bread and drinking her tea from the ever-stewing pot on the hob, and rambling futile over the house—one or two married sons and daughters supplying meanwhile the little she needed.

As to Eliza Anne, wheeled away in a cab to the great brick barracks they called the asylum, at first she was moody and recusant of her food; but they forced it on her. Then by degrees the systematic life, the pressure of rules and regulations, and the flow of new people and interests, revived her. She thought it possible she had not sinned so fatally after all. She saw to her infinite comfort that there were other people as bad, or worse than herself.

When after six months she came out, she was comparatively well again—she had a little flesh on her, a little colour in her cheeks, and she was brisk and energetic, with the same tripping walk as of old. But work in the factory again was naturally not to be obtained.

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Instead, therefore, of returning to her mother (who lived, as I said, on the outskirts), she went—in order to earn something—into the busier part of the town, and took a house for herself. It was only a poor street, and infested with children; but she set out to make a living by baking and selling pies and cakes, taking in washing, and doing manifold odd jobs for the neighbours. It was hard work, and not very remunerative. Ever ready and helpful, in the same innocent open way as of old, she would give any amount of time to minding folks' babies or doing their coarse sewing—nor ever get anything like adequate payment; while the children, finding out her simple unrefusing nature, would frequently come in on their own account to beg pies and bread of her. Her exchequer did not flourish; and at last, as she had a spare room in the house, she put up "Lodgings to Let" in the window.

A few days later, just as she was reaching into the window to fetch out one of the stalest of the buns to make a present of to a pallid urchin who stood beside the counter, the door opened, and in walked a man.

He was a plain, rather common-looking man of about forty—stout and greasy and good-natured looking; and he had a tall hat and a seedy commercial appearance. He saw the transaction, saw that no money passed; then when the boy had gone out of the shop, he said:

"Good-day, ma'am; I see you have lodgings to let."

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"What accommodation was it that you were wanting, sir?"

"Oh, just a bedroom. You see I'm a commercial traveller, and I'm here part of the week—sometimes a whole week at a time—and then away again, just as it happens; and it's expensive going to a hotel, and trade is none so good just now."

"Oh yes, I understand," said Eliza Anne—her feelings already touched with commiseration—"well, I have just a bedroom to let. It's not very grand, you know, but you shall see it. It's the room over this. There's only that and the attic besides the shop, as it's only a single house," she continued, with simple candour, "and I sleep in the attic."

"Your husband is away from home just now, I suppose," said the man.

"I'm not married, sir," she replied, with an open smile and something resembling a blush on her white face.

"You're like me, then," he said.

"And it's for yourself you want the room?"

"Yes—oh, you'd find me all right. I'm very quiet in my ways, and domesticated. And I could help you a bit in the house," he added, looking round and taking stock somewhat of the poor furniture and fittings.

They went and looked at the room, and when they came down again it seemed settled that he was to come there.

"You know you can always use this room

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to sit in," she said—"it's cosy enough of an evening, here behind the counter—well, I call it a counter, but it's only a bit of an old table which I've covered over," she ran on—"and neighbours often come in to sit by the fire and have a chat."

IV

So the commercial came. Sometimes he stayed, as he had said, a few days, sometimes a week or two. She never knew quite where he went or stayed in the intervals. But he was good-natured and quiet, and really did a number of little things for her in the house, fetched water from the pump in the next courtyard, and so forth. Sometimes it is true he got a little drunk; sometimes he fell behind with his rent—but she excused him, knowing that trade was so bad. Sometimes he really had not enough to buy his steak for supper with, and then she would find what she could for him; sometimes he was a bit flush of money, and then he would treat her. They got quite friendly; and she began to miss him a good deal when he was away for more than a day or two. So friendly indeed that the neighbours said more or less kind things about them both.

So it went on for some months; and so on still for a year or more. Then he began somehow to get rather morose—perhaps it was that he was in low spirits. It seemed to her that

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he drank more than before. Then he fell more and more behind with his rent.

One day he came in, towards evening, and threw himself in a depressed way in the tumble-down horsehair arm-chair.

"What's the matter, William?" said Eliza Anne; "you seem regular out o' sorts this evening."

"So I am," said he; "I'm down on my luck, and I doubt if I shall ever get up again; and that's the long and short of it."

"You never tell me nothing about your affairs," she said pleadingly.

"Well, women don't understand these things" (and he sat up a little in his chair)—"but Jones & Willis, them's the firm I travel for, they're not satisfied because I don't bring in enough orders; and so they're just threatening to sack me—and that's the long and short o' *that*—and if they do, why it's Dicky with me."

"It's too bad," said Eliza Anne.

"I've told 'em," continued William, "that trade's slack everywhere, and nothing stirring—but they won't hear nothing. They know well enough it's true, but I reckon they're just looking for an excuse for getting shut on me."

"There's only one chance as I can see"—and he glanced at Eliza Anne (but she was looking down)—"and it's this—there's a Manchester firm what sends us a bit of business now and then; and the manager, he told me only a few days since that he had a large order waiting, but

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was doubtful where to place it. Of course that was as good as saying that he would place it with me, if I would make it worth his while—but that would mean a couple of pounds at least—and I haven't, honour bright, got more than half-a-crown in my poke at this moment.

"You see, if I could get the order it would set me up with our firm, and very likely I'd get the couple of pounds back afterwards from our governor—only I should have to chance that. What do you say, Eliza Anne, do you think you could lend it me?"—and again he glanced at her.

As she sat there half-turned away from him, there was surely something pathetic in the unusual fulness of her outline, as well as in the pallid face, with which it matched so oddly; but on the common nature of the man this, whatever it might have been, was lost. The only effect produced on him was one of slight annoyance, and of added weariness with the world in general.

There was a pause. Then she said: "Nay, man, I have only them two or three pounds upstairs—three pound ten in all, I believe, what I have been saving for what's to come"—and she coloured a little—"and I couldn't let you have that."

"But if all went right you'd have it back again before it was needed—before the youngster comes, I mean—and, if not, why we might as

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well put an end to the whole blessed show as live on like this."

They argued and discussed a little. Then the foregone conclusion came. She went upstairs, brought down her little hoard and gave it to him. He said he would take the night train to Manchester, drop in early next day and see the said manager, and probably settle the matter. He would write immediately to relieve her mind. And so he went out into the night.

V

A day or two passed, and no tidings from him. Then a week passed, and still no tidings. Then a terrible depression fastened down upon her. At first, of course, she kept trusting him, that he *would* return. But as the weeks, and then months, went by, and he neither returned nor made any sign, she relapsed completely; all use, all strength seemed gone out of her life. Her brain did not exactly give way, as it had done before, but she settled down by degrees into a kind of hopeless, apathetic stupor.

The signs of phthisis, however, returned—and far more seriously than before—she wasted, and grew deathly thin. [Then the child was born, but died almost immediately.] And then came the news that the old mother, still climbing on to the sofa-arm to the last, had fallen, and

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hurt herself badly. Eliza Anne went home to live with her mother again, and nurse her; but before long was in bed herself, dying of consumption.

A brief fortnight and the end came. There she lay, in the little attic—(her mother ill in another room)—fearfully emaciated and corpse-like, with pale yellow face, blue under the eyes, the strange odour of death investing her; but apparently clear-minded, and talking a little from time to time. About the Devil however and his persecutions she said nothing—nor about God and His judgments. These two personalities—once so high on her horizon—she seemed somehow to have forgotten. But every now and then, hardly conscious that she was speaking, she hoped that “he” would return.

By the bedside stood two married sisters. They had done all that they could think of, and there they stood in an uncomfortable tearful way, staring at the poor semi-lifeless husk which, like a chrysalis, shook occasionally to the struggles of the departing creature. The breathing grew painfully slow and difficult—so slow that it seemed sometimes that it would not return.

Then it grew slower still. The suspense between-whiles was painful. The common paper on the wall looked so staringly ugly; the window looked out on nothing but the high brick wall across the road; the tumbler stood on her little table by the bedside, but to

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wet her poor parched lips once again seemed hardly worth while.

It was a relief when at last the wheezing sound did really not return. The two sisters went away to break the news to the old mother. The window of the ill-aired room was opened a little wider ; and one brief phase of human life was finished.

A COUNTRY PUB

IT was early December; and over all the Midland districts of England the evening was cold and wintry, with falling snow. In one little remote valley the lights of the scattered farm-houses could hardly be seen; and the moon only appeared fitfully with a faint lace-encircled glamour in the sky. But inside the "White Horse" kitchen there blazed a ruddy fire, and a few farmers and farm-men and a navy or two gathered in evident satisfaction round it; while from time to time the door opened and admitted a new-comer. Mugs and jugs and half-empty glasses stood on the tables, a reek of tobacco diffused itself, the old Dutch clock ticked dozily away in the corner, and Mrs. Pinder, the landlady, busied herself from table to table with her customers.

Mrs. Pinder was an active, hearty woman of about five and forty, direct, outspoken, jovial, with a good eye to business—a woman well-suited for her work. The business was her own; and she kept her husband—a small and comparatively insignificant person—in amiable subjection, making him fetch and carry like a good dog.

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"By Guy! it's a rum 'un," ejaculated a youngish man, coming in at the door—stamping his feet on the floor and shaking his cap to get the snow off—his high colour and gleaming eyes giving him a humorous expression. He was not an agriculturist, but had some work connected with the water-supply, and travelled a good deal over the district in the performance of it. "By Guy! it's a rum 'un. Christmas is comin' early this year, I'm thinking."

"Don't it suit thee then, Fred?" said one of the company.

"Nay, it suits me well enough—that is, when I'm got indoors and before a good fire," replied Fred.

"Ay! ay!" said several voices in chorus.

"Oh ay! it makes onything taste sweeter when you're a bit short on it," said an old man, with a kindly face and a clean hale look about him, sitting in the arm-chair in the corner.

"Like they say, mustard makes beef taste nasty when you don't put any on," interjected a comic-looking chap in a cap, who was a bit of a wag.

There was a laugh. And the conversation continued.

"Sup!" said Jim Loder to Fred, pushing a pint-pot towards him.

Fred took the pot and drank. Then turned to Mrs. Pinder, saying, "Fetch us a quart, Missus."

They were sitting at a small side-table, a little back from the fire.

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"Sithee, Jim," said Fred, "I saw that widow again to-day at Oxton."

"Did thou now?" replied Jim, much interested; "and thou'st been to Oxton? and how did she seem? did she seem likely?"

"Oh, she was off, offish—I could make nowt on her; she wouldn't look at me. But I'll be at her again—blest if I won't."

"That's the way, Fred; don't be for giving in. She's a right 'un—I'm sure she is."

"What's that you're talking about?" said Mrs. Pinder, in a heavy whisper aside from the rest of the company—as she put the quart-jug down on the table.

"Why, Fred here is after a widow at Oxton—over the hills you know, ten mile from this."

"A widow, a widow!" exclaimed Mrs. Pinder, with a little jaunty movement as though she were going to begin a dance—"oh, that's grand! I wish I was a widow myself. That man of mine's no good. I shall soap the cellar steps one day and let him down, and get rid of him that way." [She had said this so many times, and in her husband's own presence, that no one took any notice of it!] "A widow!" she continued in a low voice, leaning to Fred and counting him his change; "but tell me, is she young and tender?"

"Oh yes, middling," replied Fred, laughing.

"Well, you don't want 'em *too* young—take my advice—the old 'uns know more."

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"That's right enough; but I like 'em plump!" said Fred.

There was a gust of laughter through the room; and for the moment Fred Evans looked up, thinking it was at him.

But it was not. The men round the fire were listening to the stiff, comic-looking chap with the cap on, who was describing a Hunt-supper at the Hall, at which he had been present some time before; and his recital was punctuated with exclamations of amusement.

"Nay, you never saw such goings on. There was about a dozen knives and forks to each person, and as many kinds of meat—beef and mutton, and roast and boiled, and veal and ham, and chickens and ducks, and vegetables and sweets, and cheese and celery—and I don't know what all; and waiters in white ties, just like real gen'lemen, standing behind your chair and watching you, every mouthful. Ye had to cling on to your plate with both hands! I swear I couldn't eat for fear of 'em snatching it away!"

"I'll lay you got your share, Geordie, all the same," interposed a voice.

"Oh ay! I'll lay he did," said the old man in the corner, with a twinkle.

"I didn't get one half of what I reckoned for," retorted Geordie, severely tragic. "And them serviettes, or napkins, whatever they call 'em. *They* was no good to me. I let mine go under the table, first off, and got

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my foot on it! And then Squire Halliday, he jumps up and says a lot of soft about us all being jolly good fellows, and what a grand thing sport is, and how as the Empire would go to pieces if it weren't for sport—though I'm blessed if I could see where the connection came in—but it was all to console us like for the fences they've ruined, and for us having to rear them damned puppies for the kennels."

There was a laugh at this outburst. And then a voice said :

"And how about beer, Geordie?"

"Beer!" was the reply; "why, they was filling up our glasses and slopping beer into us all of a piece. But I didn't get half as much beer as that last puppy stole milk out of our Sarah's milk pancheons. He had his head in 'em all along!"

At this moment there was an interruption caused by the door opening, and a gust of cold air mingled with snow swept in.

"Put that bit o' wood i' t'oil" (put the door into the hole), shouted a great red-faced farmer, turning round from the fire—"else we'll be like to be frozen." Then seeing who it was, he continued, "Why, it's Darkie!" and he edged his chair a bit to one side while a tough, sturdy little man—a navvy—found his way through into the firelit circle and took a low seat on a grindstone which lay close to one end of the fender.

"Thou'rt not sleeping out then, to-neet,

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Darkie?" said Mrs. Pinder, bustling round with a tray of empty glasses.

"Fetch us a pint, and don't talk soft!" was Darkie's reply. He had a dwarfish muscular appearance; and his swarthy skin and dark eyes and brows and hair sufficiently accounted for his nickname. His habit of sleeping out under the hedges was well known.

"Not but what dossin' out's a dèal sweeter and kinder, most neets, I say, than bein' mewed up in a 'ouse." He said this quite audibly, but in a manner as if talking to himself.

"Thou wouldn't care for it a night like this?" said he of the Hunt-supper.

"I shouldn't be so particklar!" replied Darkie, somewhat ambiguously.

"Don't thou ever catch cold?" queried the other.

"Catch cowl'd? Nao!" was the contemptuous answer.

"Last time he slep' out, he was glad to take refuge in our pig-cote," put in Mrs. Pinder.

"It warn't the *last* time, neither!" retorted Darkie; and then, after taking a swig from the pot which the landlady had just brought him, and putting it down on the floor, he went on:

"But that war a neet, sure enough. It war thunderin' and leetnin' like mad, but I had got a quart or two inside, so I knowed I was all right, and I jus' lay down on the

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roadside under a bank by Crapper's house there, and was dozin' off grand, when down it came, cats and dogs as they say, a fair drencher. Well, I warn't going to stir for a nice warm rain like that, and I jus' slep' on. But Crapper himself must have passed by and spied me; for presently both he and Mrs. Crapper comes out of the house with a lantern, and begins pushin' me about. And he says, 'Git up, Darkie, you'll be drownded;' and she says, 'Oh, poor man, poor man! let's take 'im into the 'ouse.' But I had just sense enough to keep still and say, 'Let me be! let me be!' So when I had said that several times, and they could make nothing o' me, they went back to the 'ouse again, and I thowt I had gotten shut on 'em."

"Well, thou'rt a rum 'un, Darkie," said the landlady—"they might have treated thee ever so grand—a lidy and gen'leman like that—if thou had but humoured them a bit."

"But back they comes in a few minutes," continued Darkie, not heeding the interruption, "with some empty sacks, and begins putting them over me as tender as if I was a new-born babe. 'I think he'll do now,' says Mr. Crapper; and then his wife says, 'It seems drefful to leave 'im like this;' but I kep' quiet as a mouse all the time, and so they went off, and I was soon asleep. But in the morning, early, I felt a bit cool and damp, so I jus' leaves the sacks there in the road and

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creeps into Mrs. Pinder's pig-cote, as she says, for I had 'eard she was going to buy a pig but had not got one yet; and I have to thank you, Missus, for a very nicet lodging." And Darkie took another big swig at the jug.

"Yes indeed," said Mrs. Pinder, stopping in her career with the tray; "he's not soft, he isn't—for I had just put in some nice new straw, and he got the first turn on it!"

"Happen thou would not have minded if piggy had been there too?" hazarded the red-faced farmer.

"Nay," retorted Darkie, "I'd liefer sleep with Mrs. Greenfield. Mrs. Greenfield'll allus give me a lodging. She never turns on me; and she don't axe no soft questions."

He seemed a little huffed; and the old man in the corner chair, in order to give another turn to the conversation, said:

"Folks is none so hardy nowadays as they used for to be. I remember when I was a boy it was a common thing for the men to sleep with Mrs. Greenfield, as you call it—eh! dear! quite a common thing."

There was a pause, while the company were focussing their minds to the new question raised. Jim Loder and Fred Evans were still at the side-table, discussing the widow; but their voices fell to a whisper; and the old man went on, warming a bit to his subject:

"Eh! dear! and what folks eats nowadays. Why, when I was a lad I lived on skim milk

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and dry bread, all my days—thrice-skimmed milk, as blue as blue—eh! dear! You could see a sixpence any time in the bottom of the basin; and fair dry bread—no butter or dripping—eh! dear! no! That's what we had for breakfast, and the same for supper. There was no drinking *tea* then. And a bit of bacon and some taters for dinner. We *never* ate an egg—eh! dear! no!—or saw a bit o' butcher's meat. And it was the same even after I was married, and living on under my father's roof—just skim milk and dry bread (but as much of it as we liked, you know) and a bit of bacon for dinner."

"Give us a light, Mrs. Pinder," said the red-faced farmer to the landlady, who had just lighted a candle in order to go down into the cellar; and he pushed the tobacco down with his thumb in his briarwood pipe. "It war a bit close living them times, I'm thinking."

"Happen it war," said the old man; "but I doubt if we were any the worse for it; and folkeses nowadays, with all their new-fangled dishes, they bain't up to much hard work, and if they do want to bite a bit o' dry bread, they've got no teeth to do it wi'—eh! dear! no! they haven't"—and he gave a little good-humoured laugh.

Here a thinnish, sandy-coloured man, with high cheek-bones and rather nervous twitching eyebrows, who had been fidgeting a bit on his seat and puffing hard at his pipe for some little

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time—in evident desire to get something out—broke in:

“I’ll tell you what’s *my* opinion. It’s them towns what’s the cause of all this de-generation—what do they call it? Look at all them milk regulations nowadays, and sterilising milk and bottling it, and sich like; and all this talk about tuberclosis and thisis, and microbes and bacilluses” (here he gave a short dry laugh, as it were at his own efforts to get the words out)—“well, them townsfolks they lives in filthy slums and factories and dirty dark offices and places till they’re fair rotten—you can see as soon as you look at ’em that they’ve no guts inside ’em; and then the fust microbe what comes along—why, they’ve got tuberclosis. And then they sends a ’specter round, what puts the blame on us, and says the milk’s not clean! and we must adopt regulation this and regulation that, till a farmer’s life ain’t worth living.”

He looked round with an air of triumph, and the general sentiment was certainly on his side—though no one at the moment spoke.

“And the country-folk,” he continued, “what lives decent sensible lives and works in the fields, and goes to bed early and sleeps with a good conscience” (here again he gave a little nervous laugh, as if at himself), “*they* don’t get all these complaints though they’s fair living among the milk-microbes. But them townsfolk’ve gotten themselves in such a state, they’re afeared of onything and everything.”

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"You're right, Alec, you're right," broke in Geordie. "Sup, my boy!" he continued, tendering his own jug; "thou'lt be dry after all them long words."

And while Alec drank, Geordie held forth as to how a countryman nowadays could not get himself a nice little cheap cottage built on account of all the building regulations "made to suit them town slums," as he said.

But the red-faced farmer harked back to the subject of milk:

"They're making farmers in some places supply the cows with water from the mains, instead of natural water from ponds and ditches; but I think nothing *to* it. Now you look at a cow in a field"—and he slowed down his voice to give more effect to his words—"and we'll say there's some clear water in one corner in a trough, and in another place there's some common water tricklin' through the mud and the grass and stannin' in puddles—you'll see now, the cow'll go to the muddy water, 'cos she likes it better—*and it makes better milk!*"

There was a laugh at the audacity of this last remark; but a general sense that the speaker was right; and several Aye, Ayes, were heard.

"I don't agree to cows drinking *foul* water, mysen," said the old man, pulling himself together in his chair; "but if it's natural water, as *you* say, running through the grass, even if it be a trifle muddy, I think it's better for 'em

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nor branch water out of a trough—eh! dear! a deal better!”

“Them water-mains and branches be foul things,” continued Alec, twitching his brows. “Look at the number of folk every year what dies of lead-poisoning—let alone them you don’t hear of, what’s ill and they don’t know the cause. And then to counteract the acid in the water what eats the lead, they put lime and chalk and such things in the reservoirs—so instead of having tuberculosis microbes, they either get lead-poisoning or chalk-stones in the bladder—and they’re not much better off at that, I’m thinking.”

His dry laugh was accompanied by two or three hearty guffaws; and a voice said:

“Not to speak of a thunderin’ big rate to pay for the water and the sanitary ’specters and all the rest of it.”

But the red-faced farmer returned to his point:

“I’d sooner trust a cow as to what was fit for her to drink, than I would a medical officer, with all his books and figures.”

“Well, I would a horse anyhow,” put in the old man—“horses is clean feeders and drinkers—eh! dear! they is that.”

There was a pause; and sounds of merriment and laughter came from the big room adjacent, where apparently not a few guests were assembled.

“They’ll have finished their business now,”

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said Mrs. Pinder, "and getting ready for a song or two, and a drink o' summat. Hurry up, Thomas man, don't ye hear them knocking for thee?"—this latter to her husband.

Thomas, who had just come up from the cellar, hurried obediently into the other room.

"What business is it?" asked Alec.

"It's ploughing-match committee, I believe," responded Mrs. Pinder; and then as the house-door opened again, letting in more snow, she exclaimed:

"Eh! Benjamin, my bonnie lad! my bonnie lad! What makes thee so late, my bonnie lad? Come in and wash thee; and I'll get thee a bit o' supper. I warrant thou's tired at this time o' neet."

Benjamin, a shy stripling of seventeen or eighteen, apparently only just returned from work, came into the kitchen, peeling off his coat as he entered, and without any ado went to the sink under the window, and rolling up his shirt sleeves and baring his neck, proceeded to wash himself.

Through the open door which led into the big room came the tinkling of a piano, and a rather thick rough voice singing:

"When there isn't a girl about you do feel lonely;
When there isn't a girl about to call yours only,
You're absolutely on the shelf,
You don't know what to do with yourself,
When—there isn't a girl about."

Clapping and thumping of glasses on the table followed on the conclusion of the song. And

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Mrs. Pinder said to Fred Evans, "Come along, Fred, and thee give them one;" and so she and Fred adjourned to the other room, followed by two or three of the company.

In the big room there were a dozen or twenty already gathered, smoking all sorts of tobacco, and drinking their beer and hop-bitters and ginger-pop and stout. At the end of the big table sat a grey-bearded but hearty-looking man who had been chairman of the proceedings; and near him a younger man, with another leaning over him, were apparently entering the last minutes in the minute-book and counting over some silver and copper which lay on the table. A bench, well occupied, ran along the wall at the other side of the room, and between this and the table there was a moderate space. On the piano stool, which was certainly uncomfortably small for her, sat an extraordinarily stout but apparently brisk young woman of about five and thirty, with a rather dark complexion, a big mobile mouth and a lively eye, and no lack of confidence or aplomb; but on the whole rather plainly and even carelessly dressed. This was Brown Susan, well known to all frequenters of the "White Horse." She was a distant relative of the landlady's, from a neighbouring town, and had at one time been in the Music Hall line. And she not unfrequently turned up at the inn when there was any festivity stirring.

"Why, it's Brown Susan!" said Fred Evans,

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peeping round the door at her with a rather comical air, and then coming forward and putting out his hand—"why, I haven't seen thee for ever so long."

"Don't Brown Susan me, you Don Jewann!" said she, making a feint to slap his cheek—which Fred dodged—"who have you been after, I should like to know, all this time?"

A laugh went round the room at this home-thrust.

"Nay," said Fred, making a histrionic bow, "if I han't seen thee, I've thowt o' thee none the less. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, thou knows."

"And presence makes the tongue to wander," replied Susan, not to be outdone.

Again the laugh was on Susan's side. But the chairman, rapping the table, said:

"Now, Mr. Evans, can't you give us a song?"

"Ladies fust!" demurred Fred, bowing the compliment on to Brown Susan—"besides—I'm a bit shy, and [coughing] I've got a cold in my appendix!"

"Go on, Don Jewann," said Susan in a loud voice—"sing us that wooden leg song, and no nonsense!"—and she seated herself at the piano.

"Ay, sing the wooden leg," shouted two or three. So Fred, in a dry, thin, and rather comical voice, sang a well-known song, the burden of which was that in the last verse the doubtful

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parentage of the baby is betrayed by its being born with a wooden leg.

This song seemed to tickle hugely a farm youth with sleepy eyes and an immense smile, and still more immense feet. Leaving his pint of stout, he piloted his great boots with some difficulty across the floor, and putting his hand out said, "Shake 'ands, Mr. Evans; that's a grand song; I couldn't a done better mysen."

But whatever Fred's answer might have been, it was lost in the roar of laughter which greeted the youth's appearance. His hair, originally rather nice wavy black hair, had been cropped so close that he looked like a jail-bird.

"What 'ave they been doin' at thee, Clobs?" shouted some one; "hast a' been doin' time?"

Clobs, who had forgotten his plight, quickly put his hand to his head and began scratching it—at the same time blushing furiously.

With his huge grin and red face and diminished stubbly head he certainly looked very funny.

"Oh dear!" he said, "it's that damned hair-dresser!"

"Parliamentary language, please!" said the chairman, rapping the table.

"I went to get my hair cut," continued Clobs, still scratching his head, but now rather enjoying the situation, "and 'spose I went to sleep."

"Thou didn't know what thou was doin'," put in a voice.

"Leastways I didn't know what *he* was doin';

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and he went on croppin' and croppin' and croppin'."

"He was waitin' for thee to say Whoa!" shouted some one.

"And when I come to, it was like this," and he grinned again. "And then the fellow gets a great round brush, like what they sweeps the streets wi', and sets it whizzing by machinery till I thought as the very roots 'ud be coming out next; and then, on the top of that, he asks me if I wants shampooing."

"Sham what?" said a rather good-looking navvy, whom they called "Handsome Dick." He had a pair of very long mustachios, of which he was not a little proud, and which he was fond of stroking.

"'Shampooing?'" says I—"I'll shampoo thee!" continued Clobs, not attending to the navvy; "and I ups from my seat, wi' t'towel roun' my neck, and goes for 'im. But 'e cries out, 'Pay me my sixpence, and off out o' my shop.' *Sixpence!* did ye ever hear o' such a swindle? But I war level with him; for when I feels in my pocket there warn't a blooming farthin' in it!"

"Thou 'ad dropped it at the 'Pig and Whistle,' I'll bet," said Handsome Dick.

"So I said, 'Sorry, guvnor, but I'll pay you next time—I han't got my pus wi' me.' And he says, 'Git out, none o' your soft, pay me what you owe!'"

"But I said, 'I swear, guvnor, I han't it by

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me; I've as much money on me as a toad 'as feathers!'

"At that he just oppened his mouth and stared at me, as if he were going daft, and couldn't make out what I meant; and while 'e was starin', I offed it, towel and all, and left him to 'is shampooling!"

Great applause followed this recital, and shouts of "Good old Clobs!" But the chairman, rapping the table, said, "Well now, sing us a song, Henry" (that was of course his proper name); and Clobs, a little bit flushed with his success, not to mention the stout, immediately started off singing, "We're all jolly fellows that follows the plough":—

"'Tis yet early morning, at break of the day,
The cocks are a-crowing, the Farmer doth say,
Come rise, my good fellows, come rise with good will,
For your horses want something their bellies to fill.

When four o'clock comes, boys, then up we arise,
And into the stable we merrily flies,
Then rubbing and scrubbing our horses, I vow,
We're all jolly fellows that follows the plough."

This was a favourite song, and when he got to the last lines:—

"Unharness your horses and rub them well down,
And I'll bring you a jug of my very best brown,"

nearly all present were joining in. Glasses clinked and banged on the table; some of the fellows stood up, as if to give more room for

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their voices; and Mrs. Pinder and a few from the kitchen crowded to the door to see what was happening.

In the last verse Clobs was dancing, and doing a sort of double-shuffle with his hobnail boots in time to the song; and as it ended he shouted to Brown Susan to play on a bit; and so plunged into a wild corybantic dance all of his own.

His legs flew to and fro with truly wonderful agility; how he controlled them was a marvel. Double-shuffle, highland fling, pirouettes, all of elephantine variety, with huge noise and not a little dust, succeeded each other; his face reddened more and more, the smile widened and widened; Susan paced the time quicker and quicker on the piano. At last the enormous boots flew up into the air, and, heavy as they were, all his efforts could not get them down in time; and with a mighty crash he fell on his rump, and rolled with his back on the fender and his head dangerously near the fire. Two or three jumped to the rescue, and pulled him up, saying:

"Lucky thou *had* thy hair cropped, else thou'd 'a been all of a blaze."

And while poor Clobs rubbed his bruises and scratched his head again to see if it was singed, Brown Susan, wheeling round on her stool and facing the company, said:

"That reminds me of the girl what fell downstairs with her noddings on."

Susan had a calm, rather accomplished, way

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of telling a story, probably arising from considerable practice; and when she offered to relate anything an eager silence would generally fall on the assembly.

"Let's have it!" said a voice.

"Well, it's only a short 'un. It's about a girl that was changing her clothes upstairs; and her father and mother and the rest were all out. So her young man comes to the door, and says, 'Ann Amelia, be you comin' out?' and she shouts from the top o' the stairs, 'Wait a bit, Jack; I'm having a bath, and I'm not dressed.' And at that, he says, 'Well, slip on something and come down quickly.' So she slipped on a bit of soap, and came down quicker nor she expected!"

There was a pause; and then a running fire of explosive laughter circling the room signalised the "arrival" of the tale at the various listeners.

"Talking about soap," continued Susan; "did you ever hear the story of the man what fell overboard from a ship?"

"No—what's that?" said two or three voices.

"Well, he fell overboard and was in an awful plight—thought he was going to be drowned. So what do you think he did?"

"Sure, I don't know," said one; "shouted for help, I 'spose."

"That was no good. The ship was gone on, and no one noticed he had fallen over. So what d'you think he did?"

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"Swam after it, happen," exclaimed another.

"But he couldn't even swim. So what d'you think he did?"

"I know—he prayed like fury," shouted Fred.

"No, Fred Evans, you're wrong. He did nothing o' the sort. He didn't know no prayers. So what d'you think he did?"

"Got drowned and be damned to him," retorted Fred impatiently.

"Wrong again," said Susan—"he didn't get drowned; he remembered as he had something in his pocket. What do you think it was?"

Fred held his peace, and would answer no more. And Clobs exclaimed, "Nay, are you for keeping us 'ere all neet? What war it?"

"A bit o' soap," said Susan.

"Oh, dry up!" retorted Clobs, thinking of the hairdresser. "That's nowt. What could he do with a bit of soap?"

"He washed himself ashore."

Susan once more had the best of the laugh; then turning again to the piano and saying, "Let's have a dance now," she strummed a polka.

"Ain't any of you going to make a start?" she presently said, looking round—"come, hurry up!"

"Have a turn with me, Mrs. Pinder," said Fred Evans; and though not very well matched, the two were soon revolving very presentably round the small open space available. One or

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two couples of young men, for want of feminine partners, gyrated together; the rest of the company broke into knots and drank each other's healths; the chairman changed his seat in order to talk with an old pal in the farming line; and conversation and hilarity became general.

When the polka was over Brown Susan jumped up, saying, "Let *me* have a turn now—I never get a chance for a dance—Don Jewann" [turning to Fred], "you play us something, you can play a bit, and I'll see if I can't make *you* jealous!"

Fred Evans, chuckling somewhat at the idea, sat down to the piano and tinkled out a rather lame waltz. Susan, with her hands on her hips, walked down the row of men sitting on the bench with their backs to the wall, saying, "Now which is it to be; I want a good-looking 'un, you know?"

There was a laugh when she stopped opposite Clobs. "Thee, Clobs!" shouted several voices. And Clobs grew red, and grinned again. But Susan moved on.

"Come, you dance with me; won't you?" she said to the navvy with the long mustachios.

"Handsome Dick! Handsome Dick!" shouted the others—"git up, you're booked!"

The man blushed, but could not say nay, and rose up a little awkwardly; but when their hands were properly adjusted on each other's shoulders, he acquitted himself well; and the pair were soon wheeling round in quite nimble fashion. Brown Susan, notwithstanding her breadth of

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beam, was a light dancer, and Dick had evidently some experience in the art.

"Well done! it's not bad for two little 'uns!" shouted some one; and a running fire of remarks went on, as the general attention centred on the pair.

Fred, stumbling along with his fingers, got quicker and quicker, and the pace increased, partly from inattention, as he kept looking round at the dancers.

"Thee attend to thy playing," puffed Susan, much out of breath, as she danced. "What art thou a gaping round at all the time?"—and then after a pause for breath—"I'll give thee something to gape at!"

"See! she's got Dick by the whiskers!" shouted a voice; and on the instant general merriment fell on the company. For Susan, with her arms, as the custom is, curving round the navvy's arms, and her hands resting on his shoulders, had pulled him close to her in the dance, and reaching out her fingers, had caught hold of Dick's mustachios on both sides. Dick was fairly pinned. He could not move his head either way; and his arms, caught underneath his partner's, were not easily liberated. She drew his head forward, and in full view of all, planted a resounding kiss upon his lips. Then letting him go, dropped laughing into a chair. Dick, blushing furiously, returned to his seat amid cheers, and cries of "She's done thee, this time!" and Fred, wheeling round from the piano, shook

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his fist in a humorous way at the lady—who, still laughing, said, “I told thee I’d make thee jealous.”

Fred made some sort of disclaimer; but at that moment Mrs. Pinder coming again into the room said, “Time’s up, gentlemen!” and the clock striking in the kitchen corroborated her words. The company began to shake itself, move its chairs, stand up. In a quite leisurely way glasses were emptied, pipes lighted, parting words exchanged, and after a few minutes they all filed out into the night.

The sky was now clear, the moon shining, the wind had dropped, the snow-fall ceased.

“Eh! it’s a grand night, after all,” said one.

“Good-night! good-night!” said others, as they parted.

“Good-night, Darkie!” shouted Geordie—for Darkie’s dwarf figure was seen already receding down the lane; “thou’lt happen sleep with Mrs. *Whitefield* to-neet?”

“Happen I shall,” replied Darkie, with a cheery intonation—and silence fell upon the little valley.

AN INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST CONGRESS

PARIS, 1889

As it was at this Congress, held on the centenary of the outbreak of the French Revolution, that the great May-Day Celebrations were first generally agreed upon and arranged, and the abolition of standing armies insisted on, it forms in a way an important turning-point in the history of Labour-politics, and may be deserving of some record. On Sunday, 14th July, from nearly every window in Paris hung a tricolour flag. In the evening the whole population descended into the illuminated streets; the electric light from the Tour d'Eiffel flashed over a vast sea of heads; and songs and dances peacefully celebrated for the rest of the night the fall of the Bastille a hundred years before. Next morning I found myself, as delegate from the Sheffield Socialists to the Congress, in a little theatre or music-hall, the Fantaisies Parisiennes, in the Rue Rochecouart on the slopes of Montmartre. The theatre was crowded with 800 or 900 people—some 450 in the centre of the hall being actual delegates; the

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rest, in the gallery or side-boxes, spectators. A glance around them showed them to be mostly manual workers of all nations, and a few were women. There was evidently plenty of intelligence and power present; some of the faces were of an ideal cast, but the practical types predominated, dress tending rather sadly (with a few exceptions) to bourgeois black and general respectability. On the platform or stage, at a small table as president for the day, sat Le Vaillant, the municipal councillor—with his homely, kind, sensible face touched with humour, nearing sixty years of age—a good and wise man. The hall was decorated with flags and mottoes in various languages, and at various points were placards indicating the seats reserved for the different nationalities.

Some preliminary formalities having already been settled on Saturday and Sunday, the business of the day begins by reading over the names of the delegates, each delegate rising to his name, sometimes responded to or cheered by the rest—as for instance Adler, who has come to the Congress from Austria under threat of four months' imprisonment on his return; or Cipriani, the martyr of the Commune of '71, many years in the prisons of New Caledonia—a long affair, taking two hours at least, but on the whole a fine sight. Here are represented twenty countries or more—France, Russia, Belgium, Poland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Hungary, Spain, Austria,

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England, the United States, Roumania, Italy, Switzerland, Portugal, Greece, Bulgaria, the Tchecs, and Germany; and here every imaginable trade—masons, carpenters, locksmiths, hatters, printers, hotel-waiters, cotton-spinners from Belgium, weavers from Ghent, Italian vermicelli makers, Hanoverian and French miners, and so on without end. Very salient, too, the contrasts of nationalities—the eighty-one German delegates ranged under Wolmar (who with infinite labour has organised their election by the Socialist bodies of Germany, in spite of the most stringent police precautions), tall, square, cannon-ball-headed men, Teutonically phlegmatic and mechanical in manner; then the small excitable Frenchmen, who form a third of the delegates present; a few dark haired and eyed Italians and Greeks; some dreamy and sensitive-looking Poles; and the two dozen or so English, with their peculiar flavour of the sea, and unreasonably common-sensible ways of getting over difficulties.

But the most interesting part of the assembly is the platform itself, where round the president for the day are grouped twenty or thirty of the leading revolutionary spirits of the time. Here is Lavroff, the head of a colony of some forty thousand Russians living in Paris, a fine old fellow nearing seventy, with long grey hair and beard and large frontal bumps, a fatherly yet strong and resolute man; Lafargue, the Cuban doctor, fifty years or so of age, with

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greyish hair and shaven face, one of the handsomest and most genial all-round types present; the well-known Bebel, author also of that excellent book on "Woman," a square-foreheaded, clear-brained, capable man, with short beard and stiff hair; Liebknecht, an earnest but rather unemotional person, with a queer mixture of the commercial and scientific flavours about him, not altogether unlike Professor Tyndall in appearance.

Here are Cipriani, above mentioned, with his finely-cut features and long raven-black hair and beard, tall and handsome, yet somewhat austere and sad as with suffering, nine times elected deputy to the Italian Chamber during the twenty years of his prison life; Domela Nieuwenhuis, the Dutch editor and M.P., with the face of a saint, tall, impassive, gentle, crossed with suffering, yet good-looking, "very like Parnell in appearance," says Cunninghame-Graham; Anseele, the well-known Socialist of Ghent, a vigorous man of about forty, "all there," with shaven face and eyeglass, not unlike Joey Chamberlain in general phiz—but more power.

Here also Jules Guesde, the Frenchman, the orator *par excellence*, with high forehead, keen but rather effeminate face, black hair parted in the middle, and black beard; a torrent of language, passion, gesture; rapid and expressive to the last degree, but after all not so very much in it! And here, in contrast to him, Wolmar, already mentioned, leader of the

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Germans, a lame giant, wounded in the feet in the Franco-Prussian war, with somewhat cold, self-contained manner, yet resolute and trusted.

He (Wolmar) rises to state, on behalf of the Germans, that they have made a collection among themselves for the benefit of the families of the French miners killed in the explosion at St. Etienne, and that they propose that the money should be conveyed to its destination with every expression of sympathy through this Congress. The sum is not large, but it is a token of the amity which recognises no national barriers or rivalries; and the proposition is received with touching acclaim.

Then there is William Morris, bluff and vigorous, in blue shirt and navy blue cloth, volcanic with suppressed irritation—his poet instincts wounded by every sight and sound of our cheap-jack civilisation. When he gets up to speak he fairly fights with his words, grows red and furious, and throws them out in lumps—lava-hot—his stormy grey hair nodding in asseveration. No glib-tongued Jules Guesde this, or scientific-minded German.

And here is Cunninghame-Graham, with his Spanish-Elizabethan face and pointed beard—a very type of chivalry—dainty and aristocratic and a bit ostentatious in his instinct, yet always to the front in the cause of the wretched and oppressed. Epigrammatic, impetuous, off-hand, he speaks in his mother-tongue (Spanish)

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with seemingly more enjoyment than in English or French.

Such are some of the main elements of the assembly which occupies the *Fantaisies Parisiennes* for a whole week, mornings and evenings—with generally a few hours' interval in the afternoon. And great and earnest is the talking done, and very strong and deep and grave and impressive the feeling shown by the hard-handed, tender-hearted men who here represent so many hundreds of thousands of European workers. Sometimes we trail on peaceably and systematically for hours, going leisurely forward, each speech being delivered in one of the three "official" languages—French, English, or German—and then duly translated in brief into the other two—Eleanor Marx-Aveling acting as translator for the English, Wolmar for the Germans, and Lafargue for the French. Then suddenly some hitch, some offence, occurs, and the Congress becomes a scene. In vain does the president endeavour to prevent half-a-dozen people talking at once. In vain does he ring his bell, wave his arms, shout "Attention!" and "Silence!" The disorder increases, the assembly is agitated like a sea, it breaks up into knots or groups which confer with each other. The president in distraction mounts his chair, wrings his hands as well as his bell, and shouts louder than before; but it is no use—there are symptoms of a fight; for a few moments it seems as if the meeting would

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collapse and come to an end—when, as a last resort, the president climbs on the table itself and repeats his incantations. This bold step, combined with the fact that the assembly has now satisfied itself about the point in question, has the desired effect, and calm and the ordinary course of events are once more restored.

It turns out, somewhat unfortunately, that one of the first questions which occupies our attention is that of our fusion with the other workmen's congress (the Possibilist Congress) sitting during the same week in Paris, and also numbering some five hundred delegates from various parts of Europe. This question, which is not really an important one, for the existence of the two congresses is to a great extent accidental, and due probably more to jealousies between individual leaders than to any great political differences in the masses of the delegates themselves, drags its slow length through the whole of Tuesday. However desirable or undesirable fusion may be, it is obviously at this eleventh, or rather *thirteenth* hour, impossible—and therefore it is superfluous to discuss it; yet the different parties will insist on having their say, the usual arguments in favour of and against political action are brought forward and stumped to death. The anarchist Lucifers of the movement, like the determined little Italian Merlino, tear their hair and rend their garments at the very thought of a fusion; the saints, like Domela Nieuwenhuis, make pathetic

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appeals in favour of Christian charity and brotherly unity; a great deal of time is wasted, and the final result is that a resolution is adopted recording our desire for union, but leaving it to the other Congress to make the next step! On a later day John Burns comes over from the Possibilist Congress, where he *happens* (he says) to be sitting as a delegate, to express his own hearty sympathy and that of a number of his brother delegates with us, and to say that he considers it only an accident that separates the main portions of the two bodies.

The reports of the various nations are then read, and occupy two or three days. Bebel's historical account of the growth of Socialism in Germany, Lavroff's sketch of the situation in Russia, and Morris' report of the movement in England being especially interesting. There then remains but little time for substantive motions or resolutions of any kind. Cunningham-Graham introduces the subject of International Labour Legislation with a speech on the Eight Hour Day, and is followed by De Paepe, the Belgian, a man of learning and a doctor, who, though ill, evidently very ill, and speaking as he himself says in pain and weakness of the chest, seems touchingly anxious not to lose this, perhaps his last, opportunity of addressing such a meeting.

Finally, after considerable discussion and the usual protests from the Anarchist sections, three

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resolutions are drawn up, voted upon, and ultimately adopted with but a few dissentients :—

1. A resolution in favour of a general and compulsory eight hours maximum labour day; and containing sub-clauses limiting the hours to six for those under fifteen years of age, prohibiting night-work, female labour of a nature injurious to the sex, &c., and enjoining a thirty-six hours continuous rest for every worker once during each week.

2. A resolution declaring that "Standing armies being reactionary instruments, and a constant danger to and disorganisation of civil life, this Congress demands their abolition, and the substitution in their place of local drill and organisation—each man to have his own gun and military equipage in his own house," and concluding with the statement that "War, being the result of our economic conditions, will not disappear till the capitalist system is done away with."

3. A resolution decreeing that the 1st of May shall be held as a general Labour holiday, and appointing committees to make the necessary arrangements for this and other matters.

Though these three paragraphs may seem, and certainly were, a somewhat scanty result of a week's talk; yet it was impossible for any one present not to feel that there was much more in the whole matter than might appear in the resolutions recorded. To see these 450

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men at the Fantaiesies, many of them seamed with scars, and bearing on hands or bodies the traces of hard and life-long toil; to note their grave, earnest faces, and well-weighed but not always glib words; to perceive the high standard of intelligence in them and their leaders; the way they obviously seized the whole bearings of the great strife between labour and capital; the enthusiasm and determination with which they were prepared to tackle it; and the sense of great strength coming out of the gathering of so many men and women of confirmed practical experience; and then to remember that another equal body was holding its sessions at the same time a few streets distant—and passing practically the *same* resolutions—all this was to feel the pulse of a new movement extending throughout Europe, and emanating from every branch and department of labour with throbs of power and growing vitality. In the streets, Paris had just celebrated with one accord the enfranchisement of the workers from feudal chains; here, in quiet, were being taken the first steps towards the establishment of an international understanding between those workers, with a view to the industrial society of the future. It was good and promising; and few I think could have gone away at the conclusion without feeling that with the Congress of 1889 a new era in the Labour movement had begun.

Nor were the resolutions that were passed altogether insignificant. Leaving aside details,

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the vote for an eight hours legislative labour-day was interesting. It seems to show that as a whole they intend, as they come into power, to administer the industries in a systematic way, and with a primary regard for the health and welfare of the workers. Whether, when it comes to the point, they will carry out this programme as far as the systematic routine and officialism in it are concerned, is a matter which must be left to time to decide; but that this is on the whole the direction in which they are tending now cannot be doubted. The resolution too in favour of the suppression of standing armies shows the new spirit of democracy—which spirit was indeed well marked all through the Conference—that of brotherhood and solidarity, and a determination to have done once for all with the fraudulent and barbaric military governments of to-day.

It is curious, and instructive indeed, to find that while the Socialists in every country are represented as enemies of society and so forth, they are really the only party who are genuinely trying to put down war and bring about the solidarity of nations. The other parties, notwithstanding their professions of humanity, remain devoted supporters of Militarism and national enmities.

We linger a while round the doors, with hand-shakings, and parting greetings in various languages. It has been arranged that those who are able shall meet at the Cemetery of Père-la-

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Chaise to deposit a wreath on the grave of the Communists who fell there in '71. And thither accordingly the next morning (Sunday) some of us make our way. There, in an extreme corner of the cemetery, where the fantastic prosaic crowd of Philistine gravestones comes to an end, in a little wild spot in the angle of the wall, under the plain sod with no stone to mark the place, lie tossed together the bodies of some three thousand who, hither retreating, stood at bay and were shot down. There is no stone, I say, to mark the place; but on the high boundary wall beside it are hung a hundred wreaths of immortelles, all colours. The very base of the walls is strewn with the remains of the flowers that have fallen, and continually fresh ones take their place. We also hang our wreath, a huge one dyed red, with the name of the International Workmen's Socialist Congress, 14th July 1889, inscribed upon it. The last speech is delivered. We mount a few steps up the bank behind—and lo!—Paris, ever restless, ever laughing, ever striving, lies below.

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IN these days of thoroughly "business-like" commercial practicality, it is pleasant to think that a character combining in one the political idealism of the Communist and the roving emotional temperament of the Minstrel should even be possible. Such however was the character of my old friend, Joseph Blount; and as a specimen of one of the people—of native feeling, dignity, gentleness, in the very poorest walks, and of that desire for and belief in a better social life, which runs like a golden thread through the thoughts of the real workers in all lands—it may be worth while to put on record some little account of him.

At the time when I first knew him, say about 1880, Joseph Blount was sixty-two or sixty-three years of age; had a somewhat military air, like an old-fashioned colonel or general, but in very reduced circumstances; a heavy grey moustache, handsome profile, and youthful, even jaunty carriage. Ten years later, and only a few weeks before he died, he presented much the same appearance, working—in red scarf and old great-coat—in a corner of one of my fields. Sometimes, when smartened up a bit on Sunday or other day,

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and walking briskly up the lane, I would from the distance wonder what young man it was coming to pay me a visit. The same youthfulness characterised his mind. Notwithstanding all the reverses and struggles of a long and hard life, he possessed an indomitable power of hope, a sanguine innocence which saw no difficulties ahead as soon as he had set his mind on a thing. Only a year or two before he died, he said to me one day, "To belong to a Communistic society has always been the dream of my life, and I don't despair of it now. Peace and goodwill and true fraternity—that's what we want."

In fact, at the time when as I have said I first knew him, he had just been joining in an experiment for the realisation of peace and fraternity. A small body—about a dozen—of men calling themselves Communists, mostly great talkers, had joined together with the idea of establishing themselves on the land somewhere; and I believe that it was at their instance that John Ruskin bought the small farm (of thirteen acres or so) at Totley near Sheffield, which he afterwards made over to St. George's Guild, and which now goes under the name of St. George's Farm. However that may be, it is certain that this set of men did for a short time occupy St. George's Farm. Their idea was not (at any rate at first) to abandon their various occupations in and around Sheffield, but to give their spare time to communal work at the farm, and in some way to share its produce—the scheme including,

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as most Communistic schemes seem to do, some project for the establishment of a school on the place. Unfortunately the promoters of this scheme knew next to nothing of agriculture—being chiefly bootmakers, ironworkers, opticians, and the like—and naturally were ready to dogmatise in proportion to their ignorance. The usual dissensions arose—usual, I would say, wherever work of this kind is ruled by theories instead of by practical human needs and immediate desire of fellowship—and in a very short time the members of the community were hurling anathemas at each other's heads—not to mention more solid missiles! The wives entered into the fray; and the would-be garden of Eden became so far a scene of confusion that Ruskin had to send down an ancient gardener of his (with a pitchfork instead of a flaming sword) to bar them all out, and occupy their place.

Mr. Blount, in his naïve way, was probably as much convinced that his theories were the right ones, and that failure was due to their not being followed, as any one. He was at this time a harpist by profession, and believed in the harmonies of the spheres; but he thought, as he often told me, that *discipline* was very necessary in order to create harmony; and there perhaps he was right; but, alas! who was to enforce it? He had had, I believe, some experience of the same kind of thing before, at Mount Sorrel near Leicester, where he was born. His life had been a curiously diversified one—always with this

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dream of human communism floating over it. He laughed when he told me that he was apprenticed to a butcher, saying, "I couldn't kill a goose, now." Then he went into the police force for a time—by way of a change; and after that got employment in a factory. Factory work however becoming slack, and as he was now married, and a small family growing up, he bought a harp. "Do you see, I had a good voice—I was about thirty then—and I thought that if I was thrown out of work I could make a little by singing up and down the country. Having a young family makes you anxious. Well, I worked hard at the harp for three years, and could play pretty well at the end of that time; and I soon began to make quite a good thing by singing and playing: so that when the time came that I was thrown out I took to that entirely." There was possibly another reason for taking up the harp. The Chartist movement was going on at that time. Our friend, as may be imagined, was an ardent enthusiast for the five-point Charter—to be enforced by points of steel if necessary; he had often drilled with his comrades in the deserted granite-quarries of Mount Sorrel; they had muskets and other weapons hidden away in their homes. Possibly he thought it would be as well to have a trade at his finger-ends which would make him independent of locality or of the caprice of an employer. Anyhow the new trade stood him in good stead. He went about Leicester and

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neighbourhood, enlarging the circuit of his wanderings till one day he came to Sheffield. "Well, I suppose they had hardly ever seen a harp in Sheffield before, and it took wonderfully. I was out at one public-house or another every evening—couldn't get away—and there was no early closing then. At last I had to bring my wife and family over and settle there; and Alfred was growing up, and I taught him the fiddle; and from the time he was about twelve he accompanied me about, and has done ever since. We did very well then—made many pounds a week often—going to village feasts; but it's not the same now."

In truth they were a pair of good musicians—both endowed with ear and taste superior to the kind of work they were often called upon to perform—the father with a fine voice and considerable dexterity in accompaniment, the son hardly at a loss for any tune on the fiddle that might be asked for. The village feasts were a great institution at that time. They lasted for a week in each locality, beginning on the Saturday evening and extending to the following Saturday. The ancient pagan or pre-Christian practice of "well-dressing" often formed part of the festival; indeed, this custom is still kept up in some of the remoter villages of Derbyshire—the chief well or fountain in a village being adorned with greenery and flowers, sometimes very cunningly and tastefully. The neighbours would congregate to these feasts from miles

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round ; dancings and drinkings went on all night long in farm-parlours and public-house upper chambers, sleepings in barns and on kitchen settles and floors, and frolics (and some work !) during the day. I have been down with the old man and his son into Lincolnshire—where the feasts are yet maintained with some spirit—taking my turn with them to carry the harp through the by-lanes around Horncastle and Coningsby, and dancing at night on sanded board floors with the young fellows and girls of the locality ; and enjoyed the times much.

But the advent of the railroads had already begun to tell upon the rural life. As the importance of the villages waned, and the agricultural population began to flow towards the towns, the feasts also began to fall off. People began to save their cash and their holidays for trips to the seaside and day excursions to London, and the money dribbled away from the old channels. After a few years Joseph Blount began to find his receipts diminishing, and the last twenty years of his life were a pretty continuous struggle with poverty. He opened a small shop in Sheffield, which his wife attended to while he was out playing, but there was not much to be got out of it ; then came the fiasco at St. George's Farm ; and after that there was little left to look to. He did not, however, lose his native pluck and hopefulness. There was something almost Quixotic about his dignity of manner and generosity under circumstances which

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would have justified a very different bearing; as for instance when he would, travelling by train with a companion, insist on paying fares for both, though he could ill afford it; or spread his table with the last he had for a casual visitor. In this respect his communism was not of that kind which makes free with other people's goods, and is niggardly of one's own. His love of literature and the ideal tendency of his mind stood him in good stead in these times; to get hold of a book on Astronomy or the poems of Shelley was to forget all his troubles. Latterly he would make me translate to him, as best I could, the "Divina Commedia" of Dante, and ultimately he bought himself Cary's translation of the "Inferno." On his bookshelf were Humboldt's "Cosmos," Pickering's "Races of Man," and several old-fashioned works on Physiology, a subject which interested him.

Meanwhile, and notwithstanding a falling exchequer, he managed to bring up a small family and send them out into the world. One of his daughters went to Australia, and it was always a great day for him when a letter came from her, or a *Sydney Bulletin*—a paper he was very pleased with on account of its Socialist tendency. Indeed the growth of the Socialist movement gave our friend a new impetus and object in life. *Commonweal* and *Justice* and *Freedom*, and other Socialist papers and pamphlets, were carried by him to remote villages and public-houses

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through Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, and Yorkshire, and the amount of propagandist work done by him in this way was probably very considerable. He enjoyed an argument, too, and was not easily worsted, for though in detail his ideas were crude and theoretic, and often quite vague and unclear, still he possessed a truly British obstinacy which never knew when it was beaten, and also a certain ease and grace of expression that gave credit to the general truth of the doctrines which he upheld. When I took to my little farm and garden, Joseph Blount came and worked for me; and though his rows of potatoes were not always of the straightest and most regular, owing I fear to the inveterate ideality of his mind, still he was always a plucky and hard worker, full of enterprise, and a cheery companion. He and his wife took a small cottage in the neighbourhood, and many of our Socialist and other friends remember pleasant evenings spent there—the low-raftered room, with bright fire, the one or two pictures of Garibaldi on the wall, the harp in the corner, sometimes played upon, the reminiscences of old Chartist and other times. The minstrel was also a bit of a verse-maker, and one evening—it was Christmas time—when I came in, he was pinning a paper with some verses on it to the wall. He said: “The old lady and me were talking about old times—how we went to school together more than fifty years ago—but it seems like yesterday—and how we got married and brought up a family, and

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they all gone away; and now we are left alone, and wondering which of *us* will be the first to go. And then I thought of some verses which I once wrote to my father and mother, and I thought I would copy them out and stick them up here." But there were tears in the old man's eyes as he spoke.

It was not so long after that before it turned out that he would be the first to go. Some symptoms of heart-disease—and then he had to take to his bed. The doctor said his heart was just about worn out. The usual discomfort, prostration, sleeplessness followed, with intervals when he was quite chatty and good company. His pluck and hopefulness remained with him, his chief anxiety being that his wife should not be troubled. "Cheer up, mother," he said, as in her grief she leaned and kissed him, "I am going to prepare a New Jerusalem for you!" One day the new parson called. Blount was generally rather amusing with parsons, having a cheerful way of drawing them into endless discussions on Free Will and Predestination. I asked him afterwards how he got on with this one. "Very well," he said; "he asked me if he should put up a prayer for me." "What did you say?" "I told him he might do as he pleased, I didn't think it necessary. You see," he added, "I'm always praying somehow or other. I find I can't help it. Sometimes I pray to the stars."

"I have never feared death," he said, "and

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I don't alter my opinion now: it has to come to everybody, that is quite certain." "I believe in the future still, and think a true community will come some day; but you know, the nation will have to suffer before it comes, and many leaders and teachers will be wanted."

He died "very peaceful and gentle," as one present expressed it; nor did the death of the old Communist make any difference to the great world; but he and his harp were missed over a large area in the North and East of England.

A friend of Joseph Blount's was William Harrison Riley. He was a man of wider outlook and influence on the world than Blount; and his name is still remembered in a few circles as a Socialist pioneer. Somewhat under middle height, of a nervous, active, wiry build; restless, inquisitive, sensitive; of rather searching mind, stimulating and paradoxical in his talk and writing; he came at the age of thirty-five or so under the influence of the movement started by Karl Marx and Lassalle. He was born at Manchester, son of the manager of some cloth-printing works, who was also a Methodist local preacher; and after learning his father's trade, went for a few years to America and plied it there. Then he returned to England as a commercial traveller, then went back to the United States again. Finally, about 1871, he drifted to London and got into touch with the Marx

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group there. Marx had published the first volume of his *Das Kapital* a few years before (1867), and had founded the "International Working-men's Association" — usually called "The International." Riley, in March 1872, as Editor, brought out the first number of the *International Herald*, a weekly Socialist paper, which was also soon afterwards advertised as "the official organ of the British Section of the International Working-men's Association." In 1873, for some reason or other, the name was changed, and the *Republican Herald* took its place, Riley still remaining Editor.

About this time a considerable wave of Republican feeling was passing over the country. A few years before, Garibaldi had visited London and had been received with such overwhelming enthusiasm by the masses of the people that he had been requested by the Government to return home! Charles Bradlaugh had been lecturing on "The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick"; and Charles Dilke and Joseph Chamberlain were seriously proposing a Republican Constitution. The *Republican Herald*, however, only endured for about a year; and then its place was taken by a new weekly, the *Herald and Helpmate*. In his capacity as Editor of these successive sheets Riley did some good work. His articles were pungent, sarcastic, humorous. They had the merit of making people think, and the great merit of starting them into action. A number of people owed

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to them their first impetus into the Socialist movement. His frequent ironical quotations, too, from the Bible, were of a character most disturbing to conventional Christians. Also as a talker he was ready and effective, though—probably from excess of nervous temperament—he was never fitted for a public speaker. A friend writes of him: “He was personally a man of great charm to his intimates, and would talk brilliantly over innumerable pipes, for hours at a stretch. He was fond of chess, and worshipped Walt Whitman.”

In connection with the *Herald and Helpmate* Harrison Riley founded a *Mutual Help Association*—the idea of which (since taken up again by Mr. Bruce Wallace) was to organise and establish a society of mutual helpers *within* the present society, and to bring into touch with each other sympathetic workers in all branches of industry and in various towns and localities, who, by mutually exchanging their products, should make themselves independent of the present Civilisation with its devil-take-the-hindmost methods. The paper of course was a good medium for such an organisation, and the latter flourished for a time; but Riley had hardly organising capacity enough, or consistent perseverance and staying power, to permanently carry on such a thing; and at last, in 1875, the paper, and later on the Association, fell through.

Riley then came to Bristol, where a fair group

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of "Mutual Helpers" had been formed, and started Mutual Help Clubs and Social Improvement Institutes there. Then he drifted to Sheffield, where for about six months in 1877 he edited a small sheet called the *Socialist*. It was the group of Mutual Helpers at Sheffield, including Joseph Blount, who—as I have just mentioned—persuaded John Ruskin to purchase St. George's Farm in that neighbourhood. When *that* little experiment in Communism failed, and the Angel-gardener with the flaming pitchfork appeared, Riley alone of all the Community was allowed to remain on the ground; but naturally he, the harum-scarum reformer, and Mr. Downs, the very old-fashioned and John-Bull-like retainer of the Ruskin family, could hardly be expected to be very happy together; and so at last they had to part company. Harrison Riley, with his wife and young family, returned to the United States; St. George's Farm reverted, not exactly into a pasture-ground for the commercial Dragon, but into a fairly ordinary tenure under the St. George's Guild; and Ruskin practically ceased to take any interest in it.

Riley lived on for some years, chiefly in Massachusetts, occupied with experimental efforts towards a living, partly in the way of farming, partly in the way of journalism, &c. But though he continued to contribute articles to the Socialist papers, he had no great following in that direction; and latterly (1907) he died,

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perhaps a little disappointed at the small success of his efforts.

He and Joseph Blount, however, and indeed a number of others whose names are now unknown or forgotten, did a great work in their time, bridging over the interval between the old Chartism of '48 and the Socialism of the early eighties, and keeping alive, during the smug days of the mid-Victorian epoch, the flame of revolutionary ardour and belief in utopian things; and in their spheres they command a debt of gratitude from us, as pioneers of the modern movement.

The following extract is from a leading article in the *International Herald* for 29th March 1873, and is signed W. Harrison Riley; and I give it partly as an illustration of the contents of the paper, partly as a specimen of W. H. R.'s writing, and partly on account of its allusions to John Ruskin:—

“The workers could enjoy life under such a government as Ruskin would approve. Nowadays, under the laws made by the most injurious classes of the people, the workers are degraded, and there is no light, no peace, no purity, no real wealth, in the land. There may be vaults full of gold, and warehouses full of calico, but the nation is a prostitute nation.

“The Land and the People are bartered. The Church sells its space at so much a foot, and Woman is sold by the night or for life.

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Town Councils and Parliament are so vulgarly commercialised that such men as Ruskin would as soon risk themselves in a plague-ship as within their walls. Ruskin calls himself a Tory, and I am a Communist. But such Tories would at any rate take as much care of the workers as the slave-owners of old did of their slaves, while the 'Liberals' would treat them as they do oranges—squeeze them dry, and throw the remains on a dunghill. The old Tories were consistent enough to treat their serfs as well as they did their dogs and horses. The Liberals don't treat them so well as the machinery they have got by the practice of usury.

"Such men as Ruskin may be regarded as relics of the chivalric age. The present is a bastard age, an age of commercialism, in which everything earthly and heavenly is measured by a gold standard. Society worships the great trinity, *£ s. d.* The coming era is one of Communism, and the People will only become sovereign over the grave of Commercialism.

"I have had a number of letters from Ruskin, and have been notified by him that I, and pretty nearly everybody else, are blockheads. But with all his old Toryism and his sarcasm of thought and word, he is surely one of the best and greatest men of the time we are living in. His culture is remarkable, his goodness more so, and his courage the most remarkable of all. Society sums him up as 'worth £100,000,'

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and as being 'witty, clever, odd, silly, mad.' He answers 'Society' with terms of pungent contempt—terms of vigorous masculine beauty. And in according to him so much talent and virtue, I hope I am not affected in my judgment by that £100,000!"

SAVED BY A NOSE

A BIT OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

LATE in the summer of 1871 I and a friend of mine passed through Paris. The Treaty of Peace had only been signed a few weeks before. The city was quiet. People sat out at the cafés and sipped their *absinthe* as though nothing had happened. But it was an extraordinary sight. A large part of the Rue de Rivoli lay thrown forward—high buildings and handsome shop fronts—a mass of ruins in the street. Behind were scarred precipices of rear-walls, and jagged and torn floors blackened by petroleum and explosives. The Vendôme column stretched its huge, dislocated joints along the ground, a witness to the hatred felt by the Commune for “military glory” and the jingoism of the Second Empire. All over Paris it was the same. The Hôtel de Ville was gutted, and lifted gaunt chimneys and roofless walls to the sky. Everywhere on streets and buildings were marks of shot and shell. I knew little about revolutionary matters at that time. The word Communist was hardly more than a word to me. Far from my thoughts was it, for me to be arrested as a revolutionary.

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But the world knows us better than we do ourselves; and doubtless in this case perceived (though I did not) what was my true Destiny. For, a week or two later, my friend and I returned homewards down the Rhine. He had to be in England immediately; I had two or three days to spare. I parted from him at a little place on the banks of the castle-crowned river, and, sending on my box to Coblenz, took simply a light overcoat with me and a few things in the pockets thereof, and set out to walk across that angle of country which lies between the Rhine and the Moselle, and which is practically quite unfrequented by the tourist, in order to reach the old historic town of Trèves. I was alone, but I had a pleasant walk through a quiet sunny land of cornfields, and by evening reached a little country town, where I thought I had best pass the night. Castel was, I think, the name of the place. There was not much accommodation for the traveller, but there were two or three small inns, at one of which, somewhat thronged by country folk, I stopped. I had my supper in a corner of the room. The good people eyed me a little curiously, as being a stranger, and exchanged a few remarks with me; then I went to bed and slept.

The next morning, inquiring of mine host the further route, he told me that at one o'clock there would start a *diligence* in the direction of Trèves. Then I would go by the

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diligence, and would spend the morning looking round the town and neighbourhood, I said. There was a Castle to be seen, and I sallied forth. I explored the old ruin, and then, sitting down by the wayside under a tree, pulled a book from my pocket, and began to read. Presently I heard steps as of one running. Who could want to run on such a morning as this, in this lazy, hot landscape? The feet turned the corner of the road. Lo! mine host, stout and puffy, in full and hasty career! It flashed upon me at once: "He thinks I am off without paying my score—travelling on the cheap, eh?" And indeed he might well see colour for such a conclusion, since I had only left in pledge the smallest travelling gear—a bit of soap, and a tooth-brush, and such-like articles, whose value and even whose use might well seem doubtful to him.

"Where are you going to, then?" puffed he.

"I am not going anywhere, I am sitting here, reading."

"No; but where are you going?"

"I have seen the Castle," I quietly replied, "and am coming back soon to have something to eat, and then am going by the *diligence*;" and I proceeded to order a meal in detail, thinking this would soothe him.

Not a bit of it. He was checked but not defeated. He would not go; but hung about, making aimless conversation, yet unable to come to the point. At last I had to help him out.

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"You did not think I was going without paying, did you?"

"No, not exactly," he said, with a sheepish grin.

"But you would rather have me pay you now?"

"Yes—yes, I would," with alacrity.

So I paid him his modest *thaler*, and thought that the matter was at an end—while he went off promising to have a meal ready for my return.

But I was mistaken. The fellow must have gone direct to the Burgomaster and told him I don't know what yarns. For when I returned half-an-hour later to the village, I was confronted by a Prussian soldier in a spiked helmet, who asked for my passport.

Passport! passport indeed! "Why, my passport is in my box at Coblenz."

"Then you must come to the Burgomaster."

So I was marched through the village—much to the delight of the women and children—to the little town hall. The Burgomaster was the usual little round fussy German official, pot-bellied, with large goggles on.

"What are you doing in this neighbourhood?" said he.

"To see the beauty for which your land is famed, I came."

But he was too old a bird to be caught.

"What is your business?"

"I am a student from England, on a holiday."

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"Where is your passport?"

"I have not got it. It is in my box at Coblentz."

"This is very serious"—and the genial little man tried to look equal to his words—"There are many Communards coming over the frontiers from France, and we have strict orders to arrest them. Suspicion falls on you, and we shall have to detain you till you can identify yourself."

I could not help laughing. It seemed so comical—the fussy little Burgomaster, the other rustic officials eyeing me suspiciously, and the idea that I should be taken for a Communist—a thing, as I have said, so strange and unfamiliar to me—I could not believe that the matter was serious.

"You are an Englishman, then?" said the Burgomaster.

"Yes."

"Examine this person in English, if you please," said he to the schoolmaster, who was present; and I was forthwith taken aside by the schoolmaster, while the others conferred from a distance on my appearance.

The schoolmaster spoke English nicely. It is indeed surprising how far the Germans are advanced in the matter of this kind of education—a little country place, and a schoolmaster who could talk English! Fancy the schoolmaster of an English village being expected to converse with the first *sauerkraut*-eating traveller who might come that way, in German. And then

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to be examined in one's own native tongue! That was a curious sensation. Luckily he didn't go into grammar, or I should have been floored. On the whole he seemed to be satisfied with my performance. It was, at any rate, better than my German. I, in turn, complimented the schoolmaster on his English, and that seemed to have a good effect. He communicated his impressions to the Burgomaster.

"Can you speak French?" said the latter.

I blushfully acknowledged that I could *parlez-vous* a little; then immediately saw that I had made a mistake in tactics.

"That is very suspicious,"—"very suspicious," he thoughtfully repeated, and then added: "I shall now take down your description—Clerk, attend to my dictation." The clerk took a bit of paper.

Blessed "description," it was this which saved me! Drawing himself up to his full height, with his shoulder to mine, and glancing up at the top of my head, he said in a loud voice:

"Height—five feet eight" (German inches, I suppose); then, turning round, continued: "Hair—brown; forehead—medium; eyes—dark; nose——"

Now I am not especially chuff about my nasal organ, and never expect to be complimented on that particular feature; in fact I have sometimes felt a difficulty as to how it should be properly described; and on this

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occasion I confess I was quite curious to know what epithet he would find suitable. But he hesitated not a moment.

“*Stumpf*,” he shouted; “*nase—stumpf*.”

That settled it. I had not met with the word before, but it did not require a dictionary. The rest of the description was soon got over; but I was seized with an almost incontrollable fit of laughter—which only increased as I pondered more and more on the marvellous expressiveness of the German language.

A reflection of my amusement appeared in the Burgomaster's eye. It seemed to me that he was beginning to think there could not be much amiss. I suppose a straightforward laugh commends itself somehow to the human heart. Perhaps he imagined a Communist to be a kind of person who never laughed.

Besides—I looked at him—was not his own nose *stumpf*? I looked again—yes, decidedly it was; there could be no doubt about it. His nose was *stumpf*. Ah! Burgomaster, you are undone!

“A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind.” He said nothing, but I was aware of a change in his mind. A secret unspoken bond had sprung up between us. After a pause we lapsed into quite a friendly chat. Then he said he did not think under the circumstances it would be necessary to detain me. Then we talked again. Finally we parted with a friendly handshake, and I left the room.

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But just as I was departing—and this was a pretty touch—he called me back, and said :

“But I have one favour to ask of you, and that is that you will leave this part of the country and get back to your passport as soon as possible, for *in case you are a Communist*, you see, it might be very awkward for me.” By which I take it he meant that if I, being a Communist, was after all caught and landed by some other Burgomaster, he would naturally be severely blamed for letting me slip through the meshes of *his* net.

Good old man ! I have often wondered since whether beneath the folds of your capacious frock-coat you did not conceal a secret sympathy with the Commune, or whether it was the *nase stumpf* alone which melted your official severity. At any rate, I shook hands with him again, and departing found myself just in time to catch the one o'clock *diligence*, by which in due course I proceeded on my way to Trèves.

WEEDS

A STUDY OF HUMAN AND VEGETABLE LIFE

THERE are a great number of weeds known to every gardener by their pertinacity—by the endless warfare which he has to wage against them. And as a man feels respect for, and even honours, a brave and resourceful enemy, so he (the gardener) cannot help admiring these little creatures that assault him in their countless ever-renewed battalions—with claws and hooks and stings, and flying seeds and clinging roots and tendrils, coming to invade and defend that home-land from which he continually drives them. Since man has walked the earth he has profoundly modified its fauna and flora. Numbers of species and varieties owe their existence to his care and selection; vast numbers may be said to owe their continuance to his indifference; numbers again have been extinguished by his hostility. To weeds, however, a special credit is due, since they have fought and held their own against him all these centuries.

In realising the state of continual warfare and competition in which plants and animals live,

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one sometimes wonders that three or four species have not exterminated all the rest and monopolised the situation; but a little thought shows that in face of the endless diversities of soil, climate, conditions and circumstances, prevailing on the earth, the equally endless ingenuity of plants and animals gives to each variety an advantage along its own line, and secures it a foothold for the time being. The fact that a plant exists—however lowly it may be—shows that it or the race which it represents has through centuries and thousands of years developed some special faculty or dodge, by which to gain room for itself—by which to edge in and occupy some little crevice of vantage ground or opportunity. That dodge, or group of dodges (constituting the habit of the plant) has I say come down to it over thousands of years; it has been slowly added to and extended; it is the long result of a certain line of experiences; and it enables the plant to live in and take advantage of conditions in a special way unknown to any other plant.

It may be very “unscientific” to use such anthropomorphic terms as *ingenuity*, *experience*, *habit*, &c., in relation to plants. But the truth is that the whole process—the accretion of experience, the adoption of devices to meet external conditions, the consolidation of these lines of hereditary and individual activity in custom and habit and personality—is so exactly like that which takes place within our own

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minds, that in the long run we are practically compelled to use such terms; we cannot well avoid them.

It seems as if every loophole of Nature was continually being searched through, and wherever the Vital Principle underlying the various forms can make an effective new combination, there (not suddenly, but with tentative slow care and experience) a new form is built up. And if this is not the same as the process of Thought in the human brain, we must admit that it is a process extremely similar.

The Vitality exhibited by most weeds shows that they have struck from far-back ancestral times on important cues and lines of activity, from which consequently they cannot be easily dislodged. And the question even occurs to us whether some of these commonest forms of life may not outlast the most durable products or the most cherished forms of our human civilisation. A suggestive little poem of Dean Hole's pictures their ultimate triumph over the pride of London:—

“What time, when Spring is due,
The captives dungeoned deep
Beneath the stones of London Town
Grow troubled in their sleep,

And wake—mint, mallow, dock,
Brambles in bondage sore,
And grasses shut in London Town
A thousand years and more.

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Yet though beneath the stones
They starve, and overhead
The countless feet pace London Town
Of men who hold them dead,

Like Samson, blind and scorned,
In pain their time they bide
To seize the roots of London Town,
And tumble down its pride."

Perhaps one of the most well-known and characteristic of all weeds is the Couch-grass or *Twitch*, whose persistence and vitality is so extraordinary that to farmers and gardeners its very name is a kind of symbol of Evil. The grasses cover a great part of the earth, and their name is legion; but this is one of the most tenacious. Its creeping root runs long distances underground. At intervals of an inch or so along are knots, and from each knot small root-fibres radiate. It is in vain to extirpate the plant unless the whole root is got up. If a single joint anywhere—if a fragment an inch long—is left in the ground, a fresh colony will arise from it. The farmer, every four or five years, fallows his land, ploughs and cross-ploughs it, "twitches" it with rakes, and heaping the gathered weed together, *burns* it, as the only certain method of destruction; but by the next fallowing time there the Twitch is again, and the process has to be repeated. This extraordinary vitality of the Couch-grass is indicated by its etymology—which is interesting. The dictionaries give, as variants of the word—Couch-grass, witch-grass

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(evil), twitch-grass (the rake), quitch-grass, and quick-grass. The first three forms are probably modifications to suit preconceived ideas; but it is pretty certain that the whole series is derived from *quick*, i.e. living—the grass in fact which, like original sin, cannot be extirpated. It is satisfactory to find that there are virtues even in Twitch, or its relations; for it belongs to the family of the Wheats, and may be looked upon as a wild form of the Wheat of cultivation. Its botanical name is *Triticum repens*.

Another weed remarkable for its vitality, and having an ancient celebrity, is the common Groundsel, well known to every boy and girl from the fact that its seeds (and leaves) are so palatable to small birds. The Anglo-Saxons seem to have called this the Grundeswelge (from *swelgan*, to swallow), from which by intermediate forms we get Groundsel or *ground-swallower*! And indeed the way this little plant throws its tiny seed-shafts over the adjacent land, till a tribe, an army, of descendants appears and drowns the ground from sight, is a caution! From early spring to latest autumn, persistently the whole summer through, does this vagabond bloom and flourish; and though it is easily uprooted, let not the gardener think it is easily disposed of, for long after having been pulled up the flower and the seed will go on ripening out of the body of the plant; and you may see it turning its head up, off the heap where

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it lies, and sending a puff of fluffy arrowlets forth as it were with its latest breath. Lucky that the little birds are so fond of its seeds—else were our gardens swallowed indeed!

From Groundsel to Chickweed is an inevitable transition; but the Chickweed has a different mode of procedure from the Groundsel. Though it seeds freely and persistently, yet its special method of asserting its right to the land is to sit upon it! It is surprising to see the presence of mind with which a small plant of Chickweed, directly it is a few days old, *spreads itself out in all directions*—like a squatter claiming as much ground as he can cover. In a very short time it makes a dense mat which completely stifles everything beneath, and removes a hundred possible competitors. Lift the mat and you will wonder at the smallness of the root which holds it—a mere thread in the centre, but tough and not easily broken. A few plants will in this way mat over a large piece of ground, completely monopolising it; and difficult it is to baffle so crafty a fighter. In this habit of squatting Chickweed much resembles the pinks of our gardens, and the pink tribe generally, to which in fact it is related. As the Groundsel is a sort of Cinderella-sister to the proud and handsome Ragwort, so the Chickweed (*Stellaria media*) is sister to the Stitchwort which stands tall and starlike in the hedges, and cousin to the lovely pinks and carnations. There is also a Mouse-ear

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Chickweed (*Cerastium*), whose habits are much the same as those of the common Chickweed ; but it is a coarser and rougher plant and somewhat sticky.

One of the Composite Family, like Groundsel, is the Coltsfoot—whose yellow flowers, resembling small dandelions, are among the first to appear in spring, and generally on waste bare patches of ground or on ploughed lands of poor quality. At sight of them the farmer's wife bethinks her of her coltsfoot wine, and sends the boy to fetch an armful ; or turns them into syrup for a remedy for future coughs and colds—from which virtue comes its popular name Coughwort. But the farmer is wroth, for the weed is absolutely ineradicable. Again and again it springs from the same root broken in the ground. And as to getting the root out, that is impossible ; it searches deep down, and if there is rock below wedges itself firmly in the crevices. Once, in a quarry, I traced a root of Coltsfoot *nine feet long*, threading down the rifts of the rock and reaching a depth of six or seven feet below the surface. With so determined a plant there is no dealing—at any rate by force. The curious thing is that it can be killed (or at least checked) by kindness. Put plenty of dung on the ground, and the plant will disappear almost at once. This is so well recognised, that it is sufficient to see Coltsfoot on farm lands to know that they have been poorly manured. Continue keeping the

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land well-fed, and nothing will be seen of the weed. Nevertheless for some years I believe the root will retain its vitality, watching its opportunity, and will return, unlike all but the best of friends, with returning poverty.

Quite a long time in spring after the flower, the leaves of the Coltsfoot or Foalsfoot appear—grey-green and rounded and heart-shaped, and about the size of a small horse-hoof—so that you might well think a foal had strayed across the field.

The curious power that some roots and many seeds have of lying hid in the ground, biding their time and waiting their opportunity to rise again, and not expending their energy in fruitless and abortive efforts, strikes one as very remarkable, and suggestive of canny intelligence. In the case of seeds, remaining buried all winter, of course with the warmth and sunshine of spring comes the tendency to germinate. But if once the seed germinates, protruding its little shoot, and then finds the conditions unfavourable—finds itself smothered perhaps among a host of other plants—it is done for. It dies, and can never grow again. How is it then that seeds have the instinct, the prescience, the sensitiveness to withhold themselves from germinating in many cases when conditions are against them? For it is notorious that many seeds will lie for years and years in the ground, through the sunshine and moisture and warmth of spring after spring, still waiting their favourable occasion.

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A neighbouring farmer tells me that in his father's time one of their fields was pestered with Charlock—or Kedlock, as it is called in this neighbourhood—the Wild Mustard, whose yellow cross-shaped softly-fragrant flowers form often so conspicuous a patch in the agricultural landscape. Weed it as they might, its seeds would germinate afresh every year, and the plant would return to spoil the crop. So at last, wearied out, they agreed to lay the field down in grass. Among grass the Charlock does not appear—and so for years it was not seen; and they, knowing the habits of the weed, were in no hurry to plough that field again. But at last, *after seventeen years*, they thought they were safe; they turned up the ground; and lo! the very next spring it was ablaze with yellow! Now, how did those seeds during all those seventeen years manage to understand the situation, and know that it was best to lie quite still in their little beds without stirring?

Just as the Twitch-grass is related to the Wheats, so this clever and versatile weed, the Wild Mustard (*Brassica sinapis*) is related to a great number of our garden vegetables (and flowers). Its sister, the *Brassica oleracea*, is indigenous on the maritime cliffs of the Mediterranean, and is found wild along the sea-cliffs of South-west England, and is the original of all our cabbages—the cow-cabbage, red cabbage, white cabbage, savoy, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, broccoli, &c.; while the turnip, rape,

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cultivated mustard, &c., are from other branches of the *Brassicæ*.

The wild Vetches again, which are so vexatious as weeds, though pretty as flowers, are of course closely related to the Peas, Beans, Lentils, &c., of our gardens and tables. These are the *tare* which the enemy sowed in the wheat-field; and it is said there are about a hundred species of them altogether—of which ten are British—so that the enemy has good scope, in all countries, for his sinister activity. Climbing plants, with thin weak stems and bushy tops and plentiful tendrils, they grow quickly, overpowering and stifling those on whom they depend. Their special dodge, as against the gardener, is curiously derived from their own weakness. Unlike some weeds which rely on their exceeding toughness, these give way at once in the hand. Try to pull one up, and it straightway breaks, *leaving its root in the ground*. The root, thin and hairlike in some varieties, is exceedingly difficult to get up, or even to see, and speedily it springs again. Most of the British Vetches are perennial, and once a piece of land is infested with them it is very difficult to clean.

Another weed which the enemy *might* have sown with effect—though “we are not told” that he did—is the little Bindweed *Convolvulus*, that most graceful and honey-sweet flowering plant which is so common and so well known. No fair mate with clinging dependent affection could more thoroughly and completely suffocate

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her husband than this weed suffocates the wheat or oats round about whose stems it winds. Whole crops are ruined in this way. And the weed having, like Twitch, a perennial root-stock which creeps and ramifies underground is very difficult to extirpate. This Convolvulus, and the large white Convolvulus or Hooded Bindweed, that handsome plant of our hedges, have no tendrils, but climb by dint of winding round and round; and it is curious that these two plants, and a good many other climbers, like the Briony Vine, the scarlet-runner Bean, the climbing Buckwheat, &c., which also have no tendrils, have leaves broadly *heart-shaped* or *arrow-shaped*, so as to afford a kind of barb or hook which probably assists them in holding on to their supports.

That notorious character, the common Nettle, though it cannot well be passed over, can hardly be strictly called either a farm or garden weed; for it does not seem to care about open ground. Its creeping branching perennial root-stock loves to ensconce itself in the crevices of stones and timber; and wherever a gate-post stands or a stone or log have been left lying, there—or amid the debris of hedge-bottoms—the Nettle is sure to spring. It is one of the weeds which follow man, and find something especially congenial in the neighbourhood of his habitations. It is a strongly-growing, well-fed plant, and its leaves and stalks are very nutritious, being rich in protoplasmic fluid, some of which it utilises in its stings. The housewife in spring recommends

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ginger-beer made with Nettles; and the leaves and young shoots when boiled make a useful vegetable like spinach. It is also the food-plant of the caterpillar of the *Vanessa* butterflies, including the peacock, the admiral and the tortoise-shell; and probably would be the accepted food-plant of many animals great and small, did not the stings with which it needles all that come near it, forbid. Not only is man cautious with the Nettle, but the animals are afraid of it, and sometimes a whole brood of young turkey-chicks, before they are quite fully fledged, will be killed by straying into a Nettle-bed. (The Gorse and the Thistle are similar cases of plants covering themselves with spikes on account of their edibility.)

One of the most interesting things about the common Nettle is its method of throwing the pollen to a distance or onto the insect which touches the flower. The male flowers and the female flowers are on separate plants. Both are small, green and inconspicuous. The four stamens of the male flower are bent forward like springs, so as to have their anthers resting under a kind of button in the centre. As the flower ripens, the stamens (sometimes all simultaneously) spring outwards with a jerk; and if you watch the plant on a hot day when the sun is shining, you will see little puffs of pollen one after another proceed from the flower-cluster, as the florets "go off" in succession.

There are a great many other well-known

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and strong-characterised weeds—some handsome in their way, like the Dandelion; or the Sorrel-dock, whose red spikes of flowers with the low sun shining through them are so conspicuous in the summer grass; some lowly and common like the Knot-grass, or the Plantain; some positively vulgar, like the ill-smelling Hedge-stachys, or that funny whity-green thing the Goosefoot, which the country people honour with the name of Fat-hen. But the point is that they all have some special talent of attack or defence which—however obnoxious it may make them to the gardener or each other—gives them interest and character, and in fact alone enables them to exist and hold their own in the struggle. From the nature of the case it is clear that unless they made themselves obnoxious in some way, they would soon be done for.

The same thing of course has to be remembered in dealing with people—and this not only on the bread-and-butter plane, in the material struggle for existence, but in the region of personality and character. We find certain traits unpleasant in other folk, and they doubtless the same or similar traits in us. But do we not find that these peculiarities are in most cases necessary to enable us to hold our own, to give us standing-ground and prevent us being overrun? and when we meet them in others is it not fair to suppose a like necessity? Nothing seems more clear than that each person, in order to be himself, *must* have some faculty

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of antagonism, if only in self-defence as against others.

Some people adopt the method of straightforward determined attack, with stings and spears and prickles making a space for themselves in the world; some by quiet tenacity and resistance hold their own, refusing to be uprooted, like those tough weeds that tear the ravaging hand. Some Tolstoyans (like the little Vetch) evade by non-resistance, giving way at once when attacked, but really pursuing their own course underground, and springing again at the first opportunity; some escape by "lying low" and not attracting attention; some are parasites, and lean on and utilise the strength of others; some adopt the method of overlaying their neighbours, and by promiscuously sitting upon them, secure publicity and a space for themselves.

All of us, in this way, have to narrow down along certain lines; and we do so almost instinctively, barring out certain ideas or possibilities from our thought and action, barring out certain people from our sympathy, confining ourselves in our prejudices and predilections, and so making soluble the problem of life, which otherwise perhaps would slay us by its complexity. Tolstoy—whose admirable dogmatisms always have the virtue of making one think—hints somewhere that in a time of famine we ought to regard the needs of a beggar-child at the door equally with those of

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our own children, and make no distinction; but it is clear that no one will or can act like that. We are born local; and we must have our preferences and antagonisms—which are indeed an essential condition of existence.

Some people would fain persuade themselves that it is possible to live without antagonisms. They think it perhaps possible (even if not easy) to continually “live for others”—surrendering oneself in all things to other folks’ wants and needs. But whoso should do this would in a very few days surrender his life—he would die. It is quite possible to die for others, but it is not possible in this sense to live for others. And we may be thankful that it isn’t—firstly, because every one who effaces himself disproportionately necessarily thereby feeds the egotism of others to the same degree; and secondly, because every one who negates his own individuality thereby robs the world and makes it poorer and duller—witness the well-known dulness and tameness of “Christian” and “unselfish” folk generally. No, since we have chosen to appear in the world and to set ourselves apart from the primal unmanifested being, we cannot escape the consequence; and the reasonable thing to do seems to be to accept the antagonisms, and handle them finely and well, like the Miltonic Lucifer—making the world so much richer and more interesting by doing so.

So much too of what is called “living for

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others" is simply a refined dodge of living *on* them. "Unselfish" people—of the kind that have not much vitality or sturdy character of their own—find it easy to let their interest play round other people. Their thoughts and lives twine and cling round the others, as the honeysuckle clings round the hazel. They are admirable in their way, and yet they are parasites, deriving much of their support from the strength of their victims. Even the rose, that picture of benevolence, is guilty (at any rate in its wild state) of catching animals in order to manure its roots with their carcasses. It is not uncommon to find a sheep in the woods tangled fast in the long thorn-set runners of the wild briar. Every struggle of the creature brings another waving arm upon it, and soon it is hopelessly enmeshed, and unless cut away, dies. And so too we have known most benevolent and charitable people who in some strange way preyed upon the sufferings of others, catching hold of unfortunate folk, making prisoners and dependents of them, and robbing them of their freedom till they ultimately perished.

Yet it must be said that, though the gardener wars relentlessly against most weeds, there are some—like the scarlet pimpernel, or the heaven-blue speedwell, or the little wild pansy—that almost disarm his wrath by the delicate and smiling beauty of their flowers; and some—like the wild flax or hemp—that do the same

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by some hint of utility which they afford. Then he takes one of these and by dint of cultivating turns it into a precious herb or much-prized garden flower. Generally the plant thus treated loses some of its hardihood and vigour in the process, but it gains in the help and attention accorded to it. It has discovered one of the latest and most ingenious devices by which an organism—man or weed—can maintain its footing on the earth: that, namely, of making itself useful to others, so far that they in return are forced to make themselves useful to it.

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THE FELLOWSHIP OF HUMANITY¹

As one who, late at eve returning home
Under the stars, hears on the common road
A fellow-footstep fall, and sees one come
Dimly, he knows not whom, nor can forebode ;
But cries to him, " God speed thee," and is glad
Hearing his restful answer through the night,
And dreams of love, and though his heart be sad
Feels darkly some strange instinct of delight :
So I to thee. If on this earthly way
Our paths had lain together, I perchance
In the sweet sunlight had beheld thy day
And known thee as thou art—as in a trance,—
And loved thee, and thou me. But seeing now
Sad night compels us, and our way is won
Through ignorance and blindness to the brow
Of that fair mountain of the morning Sun
Whence Truth is manifest, let us remain
In word and action strangers, yet in heart
One and well known by every joy and pain
That makes divine our little human part.

¹ This, and the six pieces following, are reprinted from
Narcissus and other Poems.

LAMPS BEFORE DAWN

I WALK as one who, walking through the night
From village unto village far withdrawn,
Sees here and there a light and men who wake
With confused murmur growing unto dawn.

And suddenly the birds start into song,
And cart-wheels creak along the flinty ways,
And men are in the field, and lights are out,
While the first sunbeam fills the air with praise.

So louder, as I wander through the world,
Sounds that glad anthem of the coming Day,
And lamps of men that grope within the dark
Flash quick and quicker through the morning
grey,

Ere they grow dim. O glance a thousand ways
Through night-air's coldly wreathing round my
brow,
Ye heralds of a sun before whose face,
The whiles ye fade, men hasten forth to bow !

THE ARTIST TO HIS LADY

I put my hands together palm to palm,
And say : Take these ; and, wheresoe'er thou wilt,
Go—I will follow. For indeed I have
No other life than this—to follow Thee.

THE Lady of my love is very fair ;
Often when morning rose above the rain
She waved her white hand at the window-pane,
And passed and mounted thro' the fields of air.

I never saw her face or felt her smile—
She seemed to pine among the haunts of men ;
Till at the last I left my city den,
And followed in her footsteps for a while.

She led me where the light shines freely down,
She set me by the river-fringes green,
And turned herself ; and in her face, I ween,
The glories of all worlds to me were shown.

Her radiant front is not of mortal mould,
Her look is of the lands which are not seen,
Broad is her brow, somewhat austere her mien,
Yet magical her beauty to behold.

For all the friendless way hedged with offence,
For all the hours forsaken of her face,
Now to behold in peace her peerless grace
Is and remains my perfect recompense.

THE SLEEPING VENUS

STILL, as she sleeps, betwixt her slender brows
The calm of summer and dim twilight dwells;
Day's faint vermilion, clear with evening bells,
Fitfully on her sleep-flushed temple glows.

Her lips, like rosy lovers loth to part,
Make scanty room between them for her breath;
About their wavy outline wandereth
A smile as sweet as when swift sunbeams dart

This way and that upon a windless lake
That ripples roundly ere it sinks to rest;
And to that smile the smooth curves of her
breast
And flowing limbs delightful answer make.

O'er all that placid world of hill and dale
Night from her down-curved eyelids slowly
draws
The fragrant gloom of sleep, that overawes
And folds the waking senses in a veil.

White shines her forehead as when moon-rays
gleam
Blue-veined against the crystal vault of heaven,
Her slumbrous hair in languid tresses woven
Forebodes the rapture of Love's timeless dream.

A LOCOMOTIVE

WITH a rush and a roar, thro' the wind and
the rain,
I flash in the light and vanish again,
Where dim to the passenger through the wet
pane

A wayside station appears.
'Tis night: all is silent and still. With a scream
I waken the signalman out of his dream;
And his lamps like the flash of a meteor seem
To the passenger wight as he peers.

Then forward, with flaming front and a bound,
I leap on the dark and devour the ground,
And the night recedes before and around,
And closes upon me behind;
Where, caught in a terrible whirlwind of wheels,
The earth falls dizzily backward and reels
And rises in clouds of dust on my heels,
With dead leaves blown on the wind.

On, into the night, through echoing arch
And loud resounding tunnel I march;
By misty forests of fir and larch,
And over the wind-swept ridge;

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And the passenger-mortal, as morning appears,
Half wakes in a world of indefinite fears
And drowsily falls back asleep as he hears
 The sound of my feet on the bridge.

A thousand shocks are shattered to one
As over the resonant metals I run
With a storm of sounds enough to stun
 The ears of a marble bust.
A swerve, a slip, and that slender life
Is shorn asunder as with a sharp knife,
Or battered from knowledge of brother or wife,
 And cast away in the dust.

Yet I am not I to will this thing,
But man arose like a masterful king,
Put fire for my heart, a wheel for wing,
 And breathed his breath in my mouth ;
And bade me hurry at his behest
With eager feet forgetful of rest
To bear him for ever from East to West,
 To bear him from North to South.

So whenever I faint, or falter, or tire,
I feel and know in my heart the fire
Of man my master's fierce desire
 Impels me forward again.
Let him cling to me now as best he can,
But blame me not if I be his ban,
For since I was made the servant of Man
 I am unmindful of men.

GENOA

WHERE Genoa spreads her white arms crescent-
wise,

Her feet o'er well-packed bale and polished
spar

Step on the quay with men of every star.
Her heart stays with her people ; but her eyes
From those high garden-terraces devise

New realms of peaceful conquest, where afar
Ocean's white horses at the harbour bar
Wait ever for their rider to arise.

Here boy Columbus stood, and o'er the blue
Immeasurable fields imagined new.

Here young Mazzini, while for men he yearned,
Another world within their eyes discerned—
The one Republic without place or date.
So both for men lived,—and died execrate.

BEETHOVEN

BETWIXT the actual and unseen, alone,
Companionless, deaf, in dread solitude
Of soul amid the faithless multitude,
He lived, and fought with life, and held his own ;
Knew poverty, and shame which is not shown,
Pride, doubt, and secret heart-despair of good,—
Insolent praise of men and petty feud ;
Yet fell not from his purpose, framed and known.

For as a lonely watcher of the night,
When all men sleep, sees the tumultuous stars
Move forward from the deep in squadrons bright,
And notes them, he through this life's prison
bars
Heard all night long the spheric music clear
Beat on his heart,—and lived that men might
hear.

THE FOOTPATH

Out at the doorway with shrill delight
 Ringing, clear of alloy,
After a butterfly flashing so white
As it wheels and floats in the soft sunlight,
 He darts, O adventurous joy !

Away ! the fields are waving, the wheat
 Stands proudly over the path,
The path winds onward, winning his feet
Through avenues arched and shady and sweet,—
 Sweet vista that childhood hath.

But stay : the butterfly has upflown
 High in the stainless blue ;
Under the shadowing wheat, alone,
He stands and wonders, still as a stone,
 For all the world is new.

He sees each beautiful stem, blue-green,
 Standing alone in its grace,
Great pendulous poppies aflame between,
And lithe convolvulus climbing to screen
 That dim forest-world from his face.

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He sees overhead as they dance to its tune
The ears flash white in the wind,
But that musical laugh before mid-noon
Ripples far and faint in the heat, and soon
Leaves silence only behind.

And the silence falls on his fresh young soul
Like the far sound of the sea,
Infinite, solemn ; its strange control
Possesses him quite ; quick fancies roll
Through his brain ; half fearfully

He looks ; and the long path seems to strain
His tremulous lips apart ;
Some sudden trouble his eyes sustain ;
For so the folded blossom of pain
Has broke in his childish heart.

What is it ?—some swift intuitive glance,
Half-shapen only in thought,
Of stranger worlds, of wide mischance ?
Some intimate sense of severance
Or loss ?—I know not what.

He turns and leaps ; for his mother's arms
Out of the doorway lean ;
She folds him safely from all alarms,
And rallies his courage with rhythmical charms,—
Yet knows not what he has seen.

GOING TO SCHOOL

BESIDE the cottage door, she sees
The white sheep in the sun ;
The old Church-gable thro' the trees
Breaks with the bounding of the breeze—
Cloud-shadows o'er it run.

Upward the green hill-slope they go—
Cloud-shadow, shadow and cloud ;
Kiss on the height and hasten so
Down heaven's blue galleries below—
Cloud, cloud-shadow and cloud.

The brown bee buzzes at the door,
The lilies shine like fire,
And overhead the lark will soar
And toss his sweet song evermore
Higher, and ever higher.

Rich marigolds, star-thick, arise
Out of the warm wet earth,
Gaze, orange-gold, up azure skies,
Like beacon-flames for butterflies
Half-blind in honeyed mirth.

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She sees it all with open eye,
Absorbed in dream-world wonder ;
Looks, childlike, o'er the tree-tops high,
And smiles—she has not learnt to sigh—
Then comes the distant Thunder !

Quick as a squirrel she slips her book
Into her satchel brown,
Smoothes fair her frock to get a look
At tiny feet that said they took
To heart her solemn frown ;

Then, unforgetful evermore
Of hill and cloud and valley,
Hastens, the thunderstorm before,
Hot-cheeked at its rebukeful roar,
All down a dark yew-alley.

CUPID BELIES HIS OWN FAREWELL

HARD by the mountain springs I heard a dove
Wail long, wail loud, her passionate complaint,
And looking saw the tender God of love
Trip past with arrows sheathed and bow unbent.

Quickly I caught and drew him to my side.
He spake no word, but looked into my face
With childish eyes of wonder opened wide,
And innocent half-hesitating grace.

I thought him bashful or myself to blame
For rougher years, and knelt like one denied,
And kissed his brow and called him by his name;
But he no syllable to all replied.

Then did I fling in petulant despair
A flowery handful at him with: "Away!"—
"Farewell," he said—and with a smile so fair,
It rankles in my heart unto this day!

EYES, SAD AND SWEET

SAD eyes, some say because you are so sweet
Love carols like a lark in your blue heaven,
And flashes forth in song, and soars to meet
The morning sun what time the mists are riven.

Some say, dear eyes, because you are so bright
Fanciful lightnings thrill whoe'er you greet,
Your splendour pierces with faint pain, your light
Consumes like fire, because you are so sweet.

Sweet eyes! I say because you are so sad
You touch us thro' the heart of all our sorrow,
Transforming grief to music, and the mad
Processions of despair men call "to-morrow"

Into a heaven of hopes that lightly throng
Like birds thro' the far winter of our tears,
Waking the gloomy woodlands into song
And brushing with their wings the windless
meres.

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD

Out of all hours of woe,
Weary at heart,
Worn with life-orisons, lonely, apart,
Still unto Thee we go,
Thou whom we fain would know,
Cry unto Thee without end, without art.

Out of the clouds that roll
Round us, above,
Still we stretch obstinate arms for Thy love :
Loud though the tempest toll,
Love, cries the wilful soul,
Broods silver-winged o'er the waste like a dove.

TO THE MUSE OF MEASURED VERSE

ON THE OCCASION OF ADOPTING NEW FORMS

O MUSE, I said, your tenderest refrain
 (Muse of soft lullaby and lispéd rhyme)
Sing for my farewell song, who from this time
Must steer my bark upon a stormier main.
My sail is set. I know not if again
 Under your shoreward boughs in Spring's sweet
 prime
I'll glide, or dream to the soft rippling chime
The calm struck from my keel. Henceforth I
 strain
My lyre to Life's profounder diapason :
 The rhythm of ocean-waves o'erruns my
 strings—
Of waves which over harbour-wall and bason
 The flooding tide inevitably flings ;
On whose high crests new-freighted vessels hasten
 To music of the wind's tempestuous wings.

THE SMITH AND THE KING

A SMITH upon a summer's day
Did call upon a King ;
The King exclaimed, "The Queen's away,
Can I do anything?"

"I pray you can," the Smith replied ;
"I want a bit of bread."
"Why?" cried the King. The fellow sighed :
"I'm hungry, sire," he said.

"Dear me ! I'll call my Chancellor,
He understands such things ;
Your claims I cannot cancel, or
Deem them fit themes for kings."

"Sir Chancellor, why here's a wretch
Starving—like rats or mice !"
The Chancellor replied, "I'll fetch
The First Lord in a trice."

The First Lord came, and by his look
You might have guessed he'd shirk ;
Said he, "Your Majesty's mistook,
This is the Chief Clerk's work."

VERSES

The Chief Clerk said the case was bad,
But quite beyond his power,
Seeing it was the Steward had
The keys of cake and flour.

The Steward wept ; " The keys I've lost,"
Said he ; " but in a span
I'll call the Smith. Why, Holy Ghost !
Here is the very man."

" Hurrah ! hurrah !" they loudly cried,
" How cleverly we've done it !
We've solved this question deep and wide,
Well nigh ere we'd begun it."

" Thanks !" said the Smith ; " O fools and vile :
Go moulder on the shelf !
The next time I am starving I'll
Take care to help myself."

ENGLAND, ARISE !

ENGLAND, arise ! The long long night is over,
Faint in the east behold the dawn appear ;
Out of your evil dream of toil and sorrow
Arise, O England, for the day is here.

From your fields and hills
Hark ! the answer swells :
Arise, O England, for the day is here.

Long, long have been the anguish and the labour,
Dark, dark the clouds of unbelief unrolled,
Dreadful the night when no man trusted neigh-
bour,

Shameful the nightmare-greed of gain and
gold ;
Yet from fields and hills
Hark ! the song now swells :
Arise, O England, for the day is here.

By your young children's eyes so red with
weeping,

By their white faces aged with want and fear,
By the dark cities where your babes are creeping
Naked of joy and all that makes life dear ;

From your wretched slums
A voice of pity comes :
Arise, O England, for the day is here.

VERSES

By all your workshops where men sweat and sicken,
Foredone to death, in toil and hope deferred,
Where cheeks are flushed and pulses start and
quicken,
Not with glad life but by dark hatred stirred ;
From each bench and forge
A sound comes like a surge :
Arise, O England, for the day is here.

By your high homes of wealth and wasteful living,
By your rich tables piled, without good cheer,
By the *ennui*, ill-health, and sickly striving—
Not great to be, but only to appear ;
O'er the weary throng
Strangely floats the song :
Arise, O England, for the day is here.

By your rich orchards, lands of corn and pasture,
Where all day long the voice of joy should ring,
Now mute and desert, by land-grabbers wasted,
Robbed of the love the peasant longs to bring ;
From the stricken land
Hark ! the words ascend :
Arise, O England, for the day is here.

People of England, all your valleys call you,
High in the rising sun the lark sings clear ;
Will you dream on, let shameful slumber thrall
you ?
Will you disown your native land so dear ?

ENGLAND, ARISE !

Shall it die unheard—

That sweet pleading word ?

Arise, O England, for the day is here.

Over your face a web of lies is woven,

Law that are falsehoods pin you to the ground ;

Labour is mocked, its just reward is stolen,

On its bent back sits Idleness encrowned ;

How long, while you sleep,

Your harvest shall it reap ?

Arise, O England, for the day is here.

Out of your ruin rich men thrive and fatten,

Your merchants rub their hands when food is
dear,

Capital says your claims are not forgotten

If wages keep you just starvation-clear ;

People of England, when

Will ye rise like men ?

Rise and be freemen, for the day is here !

Hear, England, hear ! Deliverance is within you ;

Though like a man whom death is very near,

Though sick the head, the whole heart faint
within you,

Dare to be true !—and even from the bier

Where your body lies

A new life shall arise,

England shall rise again to life sincere.

VERSES

Yet thus I warn you : long shall be the struggle,
Not one but many men in it shall die ;
This cancerous disease and devil's juggle
Shall not pass in the twinkling of an eye ;
To undo their wrong
The people shall strive long :
O that they fail not ! for the day is here.

Forth then, ye heroes, patriots and lovers !
Comrades of danger, poverty and scorn !
Mighty in faith of Freedom, your great Mother,
Giants refreshed in joy's new-rising morn !
Come and swell the song
Silent now so long—
England is risen and the Day is here !

TRANSLATIONS

PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN

(From Goethe's "Faust")

THE LORD, THE HEAVENLY HOSTS, afterwards
MEPHISTOPHELES.

The three Archangels come forward.

RAPHAEL

ONCE more the Sun chimes as of olden
In the full chant of brother-spheres,
And on his destined path upholden
With thunder-flight fulfils the years.
His look gives angels inspiration,
Though none can comprehend his power ;
Each high and hidden operation
Is wondrous as at Time's first hour.

GABRIEL

And swift and swift past computation
Spins Earth in all her splendour dight,
An Eden-day in alternation
With fathomless and fearful night ;
The sea in broad floods, like a river,
Foams o'er its rock-foundations deep,
And forward rock and sea for ever
In the swift planet-torrent sweep.

TRANSLATIONS

MICHAEL

And storms in loud contention raging
From sea to land, from land to sea,
Gird earth with tumult unassuaging—
A zone of deepest potency.
Destruction flares before the thunder
Down the wild lightning's dizzy way;
Yet, Lord, Thy servants await in wonder
The tender changes of Thy day.

ALL THREE

The sight gives angels inspiration,
For none can comprehend Thy power;
And all Thy hidden operation
Is wondrous as at Time's first hour.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Since, Lord, once more Thou dost approach us
all,
And askest how our world wags, and of old
Since Thou didst gladly see me in general—
Here am I, with the rest of Thy household.
Forgive me, language fine I cannot master—
Even in face of this whole circle's scorn;
My pathos certainly would move Thy laughter,
Hadst Thou not laughter long ago forsworn.
Of suns and worlds I've really naught to say,
I only see men plague themselves away.
The little god of earth is of the same old cut,
And truly just as odd as at the first day. But

PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN

Fare somewhat better would the wight,
Hadst Thou not given him a glimmer of Thy
light;

Reason he calls it, and its fruit—

He lives more brutishly than any brute.

He looks—I trust your Grace will think it
proper—

For all the world, like a long-legged grasshopper,

That flies, and jumps, and flies again,

And in the grass still pipes the old, old strain.

And if he only would stay in his jungle—

But he must poke his nose in every dunghill!

THE LORD

Hast thou quite ended? As of old

Dost thou still only come to scold?

Is nothing ever right for thee below?

MEPHISTOPHELES

No, Lord, the earth, as heretofore, is full of woe.

Men move my pity with their daily load of evils,

Even I don't care to plague them more, poor
devils.

THE LORD

Knowest thou Faust?

MEPHISTOPHELES

The Doctor?

TRANSLATIONS

THE LORD

Yes, my servant.

MEPHISTOPHELES

His service, 'faith, must have peculiar worth.
The madman's meat and drink is not of Earth.
His yeasty spirit puffs him far,
He is but half aware of his own raving ;
From heaven demands he every fairest star,
And will of earth each highest joy be having,
And all that's near and all that's far
Satisfies not his highly-wrought heart-craving.

THE LORD

Though now he serve me only in the dark,
Yet will I lead him soon where all is clear.
The gardener in the sapling sure doth mark
The bloom and fruitage of some future year.

MEPHISTOPHELES

What will you bet ? You'll lose it any day,
That is, if leave to me you'll give
To lead him gently my own way !

THE LORD

As long as he on Earth shall live,
So long be it as thou hast said.
Man errs as long as he doth strive.

PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN

MEPHISTOPHELES

I thank you so ; for with the dead
I never would have much to do.
Fresh cheeks and plump I am most pleased to
woo.

When corpses call I'm never in the house ;
I feel in this as cats feel with a mouse.

THE LORD

Well then, to thee I hand it over.
Divert this spirit from his native source,
And lead, so thou the means discover,
Him with thee in thy downward course ;
And then, when forced, confess with shamefast
tongue
That a good man, even in his dim endeavour,
Knows well enough the right way from the wrong.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Agreed ! This will not last for ever.
And for my wager I in nowise quake.
My point being gained, for honour's sake
You'll heartily accord the triumph due.
Dust shall he eat, with relish too,
Just like my Aunt, the celebrated Snake.

THE LORD

Here too have liberty of trial ;
Thy like I ne'er did altogether hate.

TRANSLATIONS

Of all the spirits of denial
The mischief-maker I most tolerate.
For man's activity doth all too soon unravel,
Of slumber he seems never satiate ;
Therefore I gladly hand him to a mate
Who'll plague and prick, and play in fact the
Devil.

But ye, Heaven's sons, in loyal duty,
Rejoice in all this living wealth of beauty !
Let Nature, ever active, ever living,
Embrace you in her limits of Love's weaving,
And what, without, in changeful show doth float,
Fix ye within your own eternal Thought.

(Heaven closes, the Archangels disperse.)

· MEPHISTOPHELES (*alone*).

Th' Old Man from time to time I gladly see,
And take heed not to break with Him.
It's really fine of one so great to be,
Even with the Devil, not the least bit prim.

THE WANDERER'S EVENSONG

(*Goethe*)

O'ER every mountain-peak
Is peace ;
High in the topmost trees
Canst thou trace
Hardly a breath ;
The birds sleep on the bough.
Wait, soon shalt thou
Too be at peace.

PENDANT LA TEMPÊTE

(Théophile Gautier)

TINY the bark is, and immense the sea ;
To heaven we're hurled upon the spiteful
spray ;
Back to the flood heaven flings us angrily :
Beside the broken mast, come, kneel and pray !

Only a plank between us and the tomb :
Perchance this evening in the bitter deep,
Our bed a cold white winding-sheet of foam,
Watched by the lightning we shall fall asleep !

Holy Madonna, flower of Paradise,
So good to sea-folk of whom death makes
sport,
Hush the loud waters, lull the windy skies,
And with thy finger push our skiff to port.

And we will give, so Thou guide safe and sound,
A gown of silver paper—a goodly one—
A wreathen candle weighing full four pound ;
A little wax St. John too, for thy Son.

A DREAM

(*Sully Prudhomme*)

ONCE in my dreams a Churl said : " Till the land ;
I'll scratch for you no more—grow your own
bread ; "

And " Make your clothes yourself," the Weaver
said ;

And then the Mason, " Take the trowel in hand."
And thus forsaken of the human band,

Whose curse on every side was on my head,
When help from heaven I solicited
Lions instead about my path did stand.

My eyes I rubbed, when came the daylight hours,
For see! bold comrades on their ladders whistled,
Trades hummed and buzzed, and fields with
harvest bristled.

I knew the best : that in this world of ours
None can dispense his fellow-men withal ;
And from that day to this I've loved them all !

THE SWALLOW

(*Sully Prudhomme*)

O THOU who all alone dost ride
To Heaven, nor wait the rocks to scale;
And then o'er precipices glide
Swiftly and safe into the vale!

Who, without stooping to the brink
Where we must kneeling quench our thirst,
Canst soar aloft and freely drink
From the rainclouds before they burst.

Who leaving us when roses fall
Back to thy nest in Spring dost come,
Faithful to two—the best of all—
To Independence and to Home:

Like thee doth my soul soar, dear Swallow,
And sudden leave her earthly night,
And with swift wings of fancy follow
The fairy circles of thy flight.

THE SWALLOW

My Soul for *her* mate daily pants,
My Soul must on long journeys rove :
She also has two savage wants—
Freedom of Life and steadfast Love.

THE END

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